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THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

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# THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

BETWEEN

## DEATH AND JUDGMENT

*BEING A SEQUEL TO*

AFTER DEATH

BY

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'I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep.'

Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κεκοιμημένων.

1 THESS. iv. 13.



THE following pages were ready for publication, dedicated to the memory of a valued friend, Henry Parry Liddon, when it pleased God to visit me with the heaviest visitation possible for man. It may be that He, Who knows the end from the beginning, has been mercifully preparing me for this mysterious dispensation of His Providence, for at the opening of the year I was driven by a strong impulse to break off another book which I was engaged in writing, and to give my whole attention to throwing into definite shape the thoughts on the unseen world which are here set forth. I was hoping to hear that they had brought help and comfort to others; God has willed that I should be the first to test their power in my own soul.

H. M. L.

Nov. 11, 1890.





IN : PIAM : MEMORIAM :  
UXORIS : DESIDERATISSIMÆ :  
VOLUNTATE : DIVINA : PRÆREPTÆ :  
QUAM : AURIS : AUDIENS : BEATIFICABAT :  
CUI : OCULUS : VIDENS : TESTIMONIUM : REDDEBAT :  
SOCIETATEM : IN : ÆTERNUM : RESTITUENDAM :  
MAGNA : CUM : FIDE : EXPECTANS :  
HOC : OPUSCULUM : DEDICO.



## Preface.

**E**LEVEN years have elapsed since I published *After Death*. It embodied the results of a patient investigation upon three important questions connected with the Intermediate State, viz., (1) the lawfulness of praying in any way for the dead ; (2) the grounds for believing in the intercessions of the dead on our behalf ; and (3), as a consequence of this belief, the legitimacy of the practice of addressing appeals to the dead for their help or intercession. I endeavoured to set forth dispassionately, without prejudice of any kind, the conclusions which seemed to be forced upon us by an accumulation of evidence drawn from a variety of primitive sources.

The fact of the book having passed through many editions and been widely read, may be taken as some proof that I did not altogether fail in separating what has been regarded as a burning subject, almost invariably provoking bitterness of controversy, from the sphere of party-spirit. It was probably the surprise expressed by the critics that I had been able to do this, which first drew attention to the book, and attracted readers, who would otherwise have turned away from a subject which has had so many distressing associations. The review in *The Guardian* dwelt much upon "the moderation, sober, calm candour, and fairness" with which the subject was discussed on its merits, and "the boldness" with which the author gave "his conclusions on the evidence alone." If it has helped in the smallest degree to secure the result anticipated in the same review, it must always be a

matter for thankfulness. "It brings with it," the writer said, "the promise that, perhaps from a more general recognition of what is of Catholic authority, our children, while they may have outgrown the danger of confounding the devotional growths of later times with the usage of earlier ones, may enjoy, without offence, a primitive liberty of prayer, which we, their fathers, could only use grudgingly and under suspicion."

As may well be supposed, the publication of the book led to a large correspondence both with friends and strangers. In their letters many kindred questions were opened up. It is on these that I have attempted to deal in the following pages. Unlike the former book, the present is in part speculative. In that, there was ample evidence to appeal to; in this, at times, there is little of a direct nature, and one is obliged to be satisfied with that which is only inferential.

Whenever there was reason to believe that the subjects were dealt with in the Primitive Church, I have had recourse to its authority, and rested upon it; but I have no right to appeal to it with confidence, because there is rarely any such general evidence as can satisfy the Vincentian test.

It is often said that very little is revealed to us concerning the future world; and many a man shrinks from all consideration of the state after death, through fear of incurring S. Paul's rebuke for "intruding into those things which he hath not seen." They regard the grave as a deep gulf fixed between the visible and the invisible, "too great to allow even thought to overleap." It tends, I believe, to foster, even in good and holy men, a spirit of the old Sadduceeism, which thrust the dead out of sight and mind with all possible speed. The frequent citations from

Holy Scripture in the several chapters will show that much more is written in God's Word on the subject than men are disposed to imagine.

It only remains for me now to express my obligations to a few friends who have helped me directly or indirectly. First, to Canon Liddon, whose loss to the Visible Church, I, in common with a multitude of others, have now to deplore. I owe much to him both for counsel in difficulty and for encouragement in face of opposition. At a time when he knew that obstacles were being interposed, he urged the continued pursuit of the study in terms so forcible that they amounted almost to compulsion. Upon the desirableness of praying for the dead, and the need of inculcating the practice, nothing could exceed the strength of his convictions. He expressed them ten years ago to me in the

following very striking language: "Courage is needed to announce the truth in the face of the Puritanical tradition which is so disastrously prominent, generally speaking, in the high places of the Church of England. It is singular that men can go on appealing to the Primitive Church, and yet ignore or deny what was as much a part of its life, public as well as private, as the worship of our Lord—and much more so than its recognition of some parts of our present Canon of the New Testament." I quote these words because I believe there are many who will gladly be guided by his judgment.

Again, in reference to some of the most important chapters in this present book, especially those touching the probation of the heathen and ignorant after death, and the absence of authority for a like probation for those who had been taught in this life, he wrote,



“We are clearly of one mind about the Intermediate State; as I cannot deprecate very natural speculations, so long as they profess themselves speculations resting on whatever basis of Theological probability; and you are opposed to making anything *de fide* which is not clearly revealed as being so.”

I have been strengthened in my conclusions on many important points by the Rev. D. Greig, Rector of Cottenham, who has long been a student of Eschatology. To the Rev. Canon Evans I am indebted, as so often before, for a careful revision of the proof-sheets, and for calling my attention to obscurities of expression, which I have endeavoured to remove.

Lastly, I would send forth this book to the public with the same prayer with which the Preface to its predecessor concluded: “that the Spirit of Truth will regulate its influence upon

the hearts of those who read it, according as its teaching may be found agreeable to the Mind of Christ."

H. M. L.

The Feast of SS. Simon and Jude, 1890.  
COLLEGE, ELY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### The State after Death a legitimate Subject of Inquiry.

A GREAT preacher<sup>1</sup> who did much to rouse England from the sleep and torpor of the eighteenth century was often heard to complain that his utmost efforts to kindle the interest of his hearers in the mysteries of the unseen world invariably failed. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that among the large number of sermons which he, as well as his more famous friend and contemporary, have bequeathed to posterity, there is only one extant which deals at all directly with the intermediate state.<sup>2</sup> They lived in an age which was strongly averse to what would then have been accounted useless speculations on the unknown and invisible; but in these later times a vast change in this respect has passed over the minds of men.

<sup>1</sup> George Whitefield, the founder of the Calvinistic Methodists, was ordained priest in 1739 A.D., and died in 1770.

<sup>2</sup> John Wesley died in 1791. He has left a sermon on the rich man and Lazarus.

At the great Catholic Revival in England, which began about fifty years ago, the first thoughts of those who guided the action of the Church were bent on the restoration of the material fabrics for the beauty of worship, and on the reinstatement of Sacramental teaching in its rightful position. Both of these objects have been largely secured, and we are now pressing on to the recovery of other interests and practices, which entered into the devotional life of the early Christians; we are trying, in short, to establish a veritable communion between the Church militant here on earth, and the Church expectant now in Paradise.

A revival of  
attention to  
the unseen  
in these  
later times.

Unfortunately, together with this revived attention to all that concerns the other world there has sprung up a strong and attractive tendency to realism, which is fraught with very dangerous consequences, for if left unchecked it will succeed in materialising what is spiritual, and will make heaven itself of the earth earthy.

When we enter upon the consideration of the future world, we ought to start with the conviction that no man can possibly picture it as it actually is, because all the conditions of it differ essentially from anything with which we have been hitherto familiar. Our present faculties of apprehension are

adapted for a sphere of existence of quite another kind, and are necessarily unable to grasp with any degree of certitude what lies outside of it. Between the material and the spiritual, between time and eternity, between the finite and the infinite, there is an impassable gulf. The spiritual sphere is designed for the habitation of spirits or for bodies upon which a mighty change will have passed, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality": when, after the sleep of ages in the dust of death, that which was "sown a natural body" shall "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," be "raised a spiritual body."<sup>1</sup> It is the realisation of this which helps to explain some perplexities connected with two important episodes in Scripture history, viz., the rapture of S. Paul and the resurrection of Lazarus.

The Apostle writes thus to the Corinthians:<sup>2</sup> "I S. Paul's knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, rapture. (whether in the body, I cannot tell: or whether out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth :) such an one caught up<sup>3</sup> to the third heaven. And I

<sup>1</sup> 1 COR. xv. 44, 52, 54.

<sup>2</sup> 2 COR. xii. 2-4.

<sup>3</sup> "Up" has no equivalent in the original. It is simply ἀρπαγέντα and ἡρπάγη εἰς. . . .

knew such a man, (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell ; God knoweth ;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible<sup>1</sup> for a man to utter."

S. Paul seems to have been perplexed by doubts whether he was carried away in the body and spirit, or in the spirit alone. It seems most probable that it was a translation only of the disembodied spirit. Such a supposition, at least, helps to remove many difficulties. His spirit, then, was set free by God for a brief space from the prison-house which confined it, and as it passed within the veil there flashed upon his spiritual vision what no mortal eye had ever seen. The unearthly sounds of angel and archangel and all the host of heaven filled him with wonder ; but the moment his spirit recrossed the threshold, when his purely spiritual faculties and perceptions were superseded by those of the bodily organs, he was unable any longer to recall what he had witnessed ; there only remained a dim vague recollection of transcendent beauty,

<sup>1</sup> So it is in the margin of the A.V. In the *Philopatris* ascribed to Lucian there is a reference to this rapture, for the Apostle is described contemptuously as "the bald Galilean, with eagle beak, walking through the air to the third heaven."



as when men dream in the night, but can give no shape to the vanished scene when they awake out of sleep. This is what he means when he says that in his rapture he had "heard unspeakable words which it is not possible for a man to utter." The spiritual was incomprehensible to the material: the infinite beyond the grasp of the finite.

Again, the experience of Lazarus must have been of a similar kind, though S. Paul was admitted into the third heaven as well as into Paradise, Lazarus into the latter alone.<sup>1</sup> For four days his unclothed spirit mingled with the vast crowd of departed spirits in the place where the souls of the righteous from the murdered Abel to the latest saint are awaiting the sound of the Archangel's trumpet to open the gates of heaven and let them in. What Lazarus saw there must have been less than what delighted the Apostle's vision, but it was equally unintelligible to mortal sight when his spirit had been brought back to the body it had left.

The silence  
of Lazarus  
touching his  
experiences.

We have often imagined ourselves standing by that opening grave, and have listened with an interest ever fresh to the voice which bade the dead come forth; and as we have read the sacred record we have closed the Book with a sigh of regret that

<sup>1</sup> S. JOHN xi. 11-46.

not a word, not a syllable was spoken by the risen dead; that although, as tradition tells us, he lived in that his second earthly life for thirty years, there is no recorded utterance, no related experience of the other world. Do we doubt whether he was asked for the revelation? We fancy that we can see his neighbours and friends trying by every device to extract from him the awful secret, appealing to him with almost passionate entreaty, but to all alike he turns the same unwavering look—the face that, awed by the visions of the past, was never seen to smile again—the silence never broken, the secret never revealed.

“ ‘Where wert thou, brother, those four days?’

There lives no record of reply,  
Which telling what it is to die  
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,  
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,  
A solemn gladness even crown'd  
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!  
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;  
He told it not; or something seal'd  
The lips of that Evangelist.”<sup>1</sup>

The reason of his silence is not far to seek. What sealed his lips was that which sealed S. Paul's

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xxxi.

—the impossibility of telling in the body with any degree of accurate truth and reality what he had witnessed in the spirit.

What then is to be our attitude towards the whole subject of the other world? Are we to feel that “no conclusions are to be drawn as to the eternal from the phenomena of time”? Are we to stand on the threshold, taking the shoes from off our feet in fear and trembling, but not daring to enter in? The very Apostle who had revealed the utter impossibility of adequately describing what he had himself witnessed, has assured us that the condition of departed spirits is nevertheless a subject which we are more than justified in investigating: “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep”;<sup>1</sup> and after speaking of one thing that is in store for them, he bids the Thessalonians find comfort<sup>2</sup> in the thought of it.

S. Paul's  
encourage-  
ment to in-  
investigate  
the future  
state.

Yet further, it is just that one part of Holy Scripture which purports to be an apocalypse of future glory, and to portray the beauties of the New Heaven and the New Earth, to which the Holy Ghost has prefixed the promise: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 THESS. iv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

<sup>3</sup> REV. i. 3.

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## 8     *The State after Death a legitimate*

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What may  
be learnt  
from the  
analogy of  
the angels.

Again, it is surely not without a cause that so much has been made known touching the nature and work of the angels. There must be some analogy to be drawn, for they are described as "spirits,"<sup>1</sup> the very word which is applied in Scripture to the souls of men in their separate existence after their bodies have been laid aside. It was to the "spirits"<sup>2</sup> in Hades that Christ passed Himself in "spirit," while His body was lying in the Sepulchre. The analogy, however, may not be complete, for it would appear that the angels have spiritual bodies, seeing that it is promised that in the Resurrection, when, that is, we are to be clothed upon with our risen and glorified bodies, we shall be "equal unto the angels."<sup>3</sup>

The difference, however, between disembodied spirits and beings with spiritual bodies, is not so great as to make us feel capable of grasping the one but not the other.

Enough for purposes of reverent meditation is

<sup>1</sup> HEB. i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. PET. iii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> S. LUKE xx. 36. The question of the spiritual nature of the angels was much disputed in early times. S. Ignatius and Eusebius and S. Chrysostom maintained that they were *ἀσώματοι*, but Macarius assigned to them *σώματα λεπτά*. Didymus held that "in relation to man, they were incorporeal, but regarded in the light of their distance from the essence of the uncreated spirits, they were heavenly bodies," *de Spiritu Sancto*, ii. 4. It was, no doubt, by reason of some subtle corporeity, that from time to time angels have been manifested to men.

told us, and it seems to be a mark of Divine wisdom that all has not been made plain, for if we could penetrate into the mysteries of the future world with any certain realisation of the truth, there would be no room for the exercise of that faith which is such a powerful factor in ordering our conduct. There is no stronger deterrent from evil than the awful uncertainty of the consequences of doing it, and there is no more helpful thought in urging us to ensure our salvation than the certainty that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."<sup>1</sup>

What is clearly forbidden is that profane and unspiritual curiosity which rushes boldly into the unseen world, that presumptuous confidence which claims to unravel all perplexities, and reduces the mysteries of the invisible to the level of common objects.

It behoves us never to forget that what is revealed is only imagery, employed by the Holy Spirit in condescension to finite capacities, and that we may not therefore dwell upon the outside form or dress of spiritual things, as though a literal description had been vouchsafed. At the same time, it is equally

What is  
revealed is  
only by  
way of  
imagery.

<sup>1</sup> 1 COR. ii. 9.

incumbent on us not to put it aside in a spirit of agnosticism as a forbidden subject, for imagery, especially that which men have been inspired to use, must be the image of something, so that there must be underlying it ideas and forms, half-veiled, perhaps, and half-revealed, but still intended to express true and intense realities.

As an illustration, we may take the sublime description of the heavenly Jerusalem as set forth in the Revelation.<sup>1</sup> Let us look at it, in view of this consideration, both in its positive and its negative aspects, in what we are told is present, and in what is said to be absent.

The ideas suggested by the imagery in S. John's Vision.

There are certain numbers to which the Jews attached, in a greater or less degree, the idea of perfection. They are 3 and 4, and that which is produced both by the addition and the multiplication of them, 7 and 12. We cannot but be struck by the frequent occurrence of most of these. "The city lieth foursquare." "The wall of the city had twelve foundations," and it had twelve gates; "on the east three gates: on the north three gates, on the south three gates: and on the west three gates."

Again, look at the materials; there is the jasper,

<sup>1</sup> REV. xxi. 2.

and sapphire, and emerald, and chrysoprasus, and many others; they are all the most costly and precious stones which were then known. The one tree, moreover, which represents the vegetable kingdom bears twelve manner of fruits and twelve times in the year. It is all intended to convey the idea, that whatever it may be, however inconceivable by finite capacities, it will be absolutely and entirely perfect; and this is certainly a true and intense reality.

Then take an example of its negative characteristics: "Æ saw," says S. John, "no temple therein." The Church of the Christians (as was the Temple of the Jews) is before all else the place where man is able to draw near to God with a full consciousness of His immediate Presence. There have, it is true, been other ideas associated with it, but they are all subsidiary and subordinate; it may be regarded as the place of illumination, where man is taught by the word of exhortation to walk in the path of holiness, or where by the sweet influence of sacred music he is lifted above all that is base and sensual, but the true paramount attraction of such a sacred building, that which invests it with a halo of sanctity, is simply this: it brings God nearer to man, and makes him feel that at least there is one spot upon

which he may stand, and with all the Patriarch's confidence say, "Surely the Lord is in this place, . . . this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

It shows us at once what the Holy Spirit intended us to understand by denying that there was any Temple in heaven, that is, any localised Presence of the Most High; it teaches that all heaven is hallowed into one vast Temple by the all-pervading Presence of God and Christ, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it";<sup>2</sup> this again is a great reality.

What we have constantly to bear in mind is, that it is only the idea that we may be sure of; its mode of expression may be found hereafter to be quite different from what our time-bound imagination has pictured to us. While, then, there is much to deter us, especially in the experience of S. Paul and Lazarus, there is sufficient encouragement from other considerations to try to form some conception of the mode of existence of disembodied souls. It is true, and we may not forget it, that "The secret things belong unto the Lord"; but it is equally true that

<sup>1</sup> GEN. xxviii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> REV. xxi. 22.



“Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever”;<sup>1</sup> and among these latter there is not a little touching the state after death.

<sup>1</sup> DEUT. xxix. 29.

## CHAPTER II.

### An Intermediate State between Death and Judgment taught by Scripture and the Fathers.

ACCORDING to the clear and explicit teaching of Holy Writ, the life of man is designed to be passed in three distinct spheres, or in three widely different conditions of being. First he lives a corporeal life in the flesh. In fallen man, it is a state of conflict, for the higher and the lower parts of his nature are perpetually at war with each other. By reason of the strong and overmastering bias, which inherited sin has given to his desires and passions, it is a state in which the spirit groans, and is in bondage under the tyranny of the flesh.<sup>1</sup>

The three-fold nature of man's life.

Secondly, he has to live an incorporeal life in the spirit. For one who has resisted successfully in the preceding stage, it is a state of peace and security. Emancipated from the thralldom of carnal affections and all that clogs and fetters his higher aspirations,

<sup>1</sup> GAL. v. 17.

the spiritual element in his being is free to prepare itself, by a course of progressive advancement, for the goal of its ambition, the Vision of God. It will be obvious, therefore, that this state, like its predecessor, is an imperfect one.

Thirdly, he will live in the risen life, in a state of victory and triumph; one in which the whole man, material and immaterial, body, soul, and spirit, will all be transfigured and conformed to the image of the Divine Life: it will be perfect and complete in all its parts.

Now, the middle state, which we have characterised as "in the spirit," is that in which the incorporeal exists alone, but in both its constituent elements. We lose a great deal by speaking of man's being as twofold only, viz., body and soul, for S. Paul has given us a true conception of it as triple; "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> This is no mere cumulative rhetorical expression, as it is too commonly understood; but the Apostle intends to

<sup>1</sup> 1 THESS. v. 23. The same is taught also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the author speaks of the Word of God piercing to the dividing of soul and spirit—not from each other, for they were never one, but so as to penetrate the innermost being of each.—Ch. iv. 12.

bring before the Thessalonians authoritatively the triplicity<sup>1</sup> of man's nature by praying that all these elements severally, each in itself and in its entirety,<sup>2</sup> may be kept without flaw or imperfection till the day of final award.

What is meant by the body is easily grasped; it is the form in which the immaterial is clothed; it is the combination of physical organs, which through the disintegrating power of sin are liable to corruption, decay, and death. It is destined to rise again, with all its earthly imperfections cast away, to be the dwelling-place of the spiritual, not as heretofore in dire and utter conflict, but in perfect and eternal harmony.

The soul is that which constitutes man's personality; it is the *ego*:<sup>3</sup> it is the assemblage of feelings, affections, and movements—not the organs of them—which make up the individual character.

The spirit is the highest part of man's nature;

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus interpreted this passage as teaching a threefold nature. Neque enim plasmatio carnis ipsa secundum se homo perfectus est; sed corpus hominis et pars hominis. Neque enim et anima ipsa secundum se homo; sed anima hominis et pars hominis. Neque spiritus homo. Spiritus enim, et non homo vocatur. Commixtio autem et unitio horum omnium, perfectum hominem efficit.—*Adv. Hær.* v. vi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> ὁλόκληρον is not an attribute as A.V. indicates, but "a secondary predicate."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. DELITZSCH, *Bibl. Psychologie*, iv. Sec. 1.

it is that which God breathed from Himself into Adam's nostrils<sup>1</sup> at the beginning; it is that which constitutes the new birth, the gift of Holy Baptism now; it is, in short, that by which we hold communion with the Divine Spirit; for "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."<sup>2</sup>

The task which we have set before ourselves is the right understanding, as far as it is revealed, of the mode of existence of the immaterial, that is the soul and the spirit, in their separation from the body during the time that intervenes between death and judgment. Such an interval was vividly realised by the early Church, but strangely ignored if not denied at the time of the Reformation.

The Homily against Fear of Death says, "that death delivering us from our bodies, doth send us straight home into our own country, and maketh us to dwell presently with God for ever in everlasting rest and quietness."<sup>3</sup>

It was indorsed by the Assembly of divines, who met at Westminster just a century later to settle, as

The Teaching of the Homilies.

Of the Westminster Confession.

<sup>1</sup> ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἀνθρώπον . . . καὶ πνεῦμα ἐνέγκεν αὐτῷ καὶ ψυχὴν. JOSEPHUS, *Antiq.* i. 1. 2. For Rabbinical expositions of this and the meaning of the Spirit bestowed upon Adam, cf. EISENMENGER, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, i. 887. Bp. BULL, *State of Man before the Fall*, ii. 93.

<sup>2</sup> ROM. viii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Book I. ix., part 2.

they thought, the Creed and Worship of the Church in this land. They laid it down as a dogma that "the souls of the righteous being then (*i.e.* at death) made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory; . . . and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness"; and they added with a startling recklessness of fact the positive assurance that "besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none."<sup>1</sup>

It was a tremendous recoil; in their dread of Purgatory they obliterated Paradise, and were ready to annihilate all thought of the Resurrection, and to treat the body, which has been hallowed for ever, as of little account, and to send the soul by itself into the place of eternal joy or misery.

There can be little doubt that their teaching largely leavened the belief of succeeding generations; and it has taken a complete hold upon most Non-conformist Christians, who regard the tenets propounded at Westminster as equally binding and authoritative as the decrees of a general council are

<sup>1</sup> C. xxxii. *Of the State of Man after Death, etc.*, Act. i.

It had been maintained in the Calvinist Confession of the previous century: "we believe that unbelievers are cast down at once into hell." The Second Helvetic Confession, chap. xxvi.

upon churchmen. The antithesis of heaven or hell sums up the whole of their thoughts of the state after death.

What then is the evidence of Scripture as to the existence of an Intermediate State between death and judgment?

There is first direct evidence. Our blessed Lord positively asserted that "no man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

Direct  
Scriptural  
evidence  
for an In-  
termediate  
State.

Further, after that He had passed through the grave and gate of death He said of Himself, "I am not yet ascended to My Father, but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father."<sup>2</sup> It is clear from this latter declaration that in the disembodied state His soul had not passed into the heavens. It had, as we learn from His promise to the robber-outlaw, departed to the waiting-place of righteous souls, to the Paradise of the blessed, and it was not till after His Resurrection, when His human spirit had been united again to His body, that He entered heaven. Christ again teaches us that the soul's immediate destiny is not heaven or hell, for when Lazarus died he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."<sup>3</sup> It is

<sup>1</sup> S. JOHN iii. 13.    <sup>2</sup> S. JOHN xx. 17.    <sup>3</sup> S. LUKE xvi. 22.

The Parable  
of the rich  
man and  
Lazarus.

told us, it is true, in the form of a parable, and this circumstance has been supposed to open a way of escape from its obvious teaching, but it must not be forgotten, that whatever doubts may hang about the details of parabolic illustration, the scope at least of the parable must be indisputable. Now it certainly belongs to the scope of this parable to show what becomes of the souls of men immediately after death. If it does not teach us this, it is difficult indeed to discover for what purpose it was spoken. It has been suggested that it may have been an anticipatory picture of the final state, but the suggestion is not at all borne out by the language. The rich man clearly assumes that the Judgment has not yet come, for he speaks of his brethren as still undergoing their earthly probation, and as capable of receiving warning to avoid a similar fate to his own.

The teaching  
of  
S. Paul.

The positive teaching of our Lord is accepted and its truth pre-supposed in the Apostolic Epistles. Writing to the Thessalonians S. Paul speaks of himself and others who might survive to the Second Advent in words that necessitate the existence of a middle state: "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."<sup>1</sup> "With

<sup>1</sup> 1 THESS. iv. 17.



them"—it is with some who have fallen asleep and are somewhere waiting to come forth at the voice of the Archangel to receive their final reward in heaven. The same is involved in the contrast which he draws between the two conditions as being, on the one hand, "at home in the body" and "absent from the Lord," or, on the other, "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord."<sup>1</sup> The latter condition can be none other than that which follows death, in which the disembodied soul is "with Christ" in Paradise.

It is expressly said that the fathers of the Old Dispensation, who had died in faith, did not at once receive the promise, but were compelled to wait in an incomplete state, "that they without us should not be made perfect."<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, the veil of the unseen world is partially lifted in the Apocalypse, when the rapt Apostle sees the souls of the martyrs who had laid down their lives for the word of God. He does not see them already admitted into the courts of heaven, but waiting for the consummation "under the altar," and crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost

The souls of the martyrs still waiting.

<sup>1</sup> 2 COR. v. 6, 8. That this expression does not refer to being with God the Father, cf. *infra*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> HEB. xi. 40.

Thou not judge and abenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"<sup>1</sup> In answer to their cry they are bidden to "rest yet for a little season until their fellow-servants also . . . should be fulfilled," which is quite inconsistent with the supposition that the gate of death leads direct to heaven.<sup>2</sup>

There is a passage which seems at first sight to support the view of those who deny the Intermediate State; "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."<sup>3</sup> In the original Greek the definite article is wanting, and the absence of it is very significant, for it is invariably prefixed to the noun in all the passages where that judgment is clearly spoken of, which is to decide finally the eternal destiny. What the author of the Epistle teaches is, that death is immediately followed by a judgment or crisis; but it can only be that by which the place of the soul is determined in Hades or the Intermediate State.

When we turn to the primitive Church to see what interpretation was put upon the teaching of

<sup>1</sup> REV. vi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to reconcile the teaching of this passage with the Roman view of Purgatory; for it is held that martyrs are exempted from the state of purification, being admitted at once to the Beatific Vision.

<sup>3</sup> HEB. ix. 27.

Scripture on this point, we find an unbroken chain of evidence in support of the Catholic belief.

Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho, combats certain Gnostics who said "that there is no resurrection, but that when men die their souls are at once taken up to heaven;"<sup>1</sup> and he denies to them in consequence the right to be accounted Christians or even Jews. In an earlier part of the same treatise he asserted that after death "the souls of the godly abide in some better place, and the souls of the unrighteous and wicked in a worse place, expecting the time of the judgment."<sup>2</sup>

Patristic  
testimony.

Justin  
Martyr.

Irenæus vindicated the Catholic doctrine against some who professed the same heresy, as well as against some who, though for the most part orthodox in the faith, had fallen into error in a reaction against the prevailing Millenarianism of the time. "The souls," he says, "of His (Christ's) disciples go to the invisible place determined for them by God, and there dwell awaiting the resurrection."<sup>3</sup> He has been show-

Irenæus.

<sup>1</sup> λέγουσι μὴ εἶναι ἀνάστασιν, ἀλλὰ ἅμα τῷ ἀποθνήσκειν, τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἀναλαμβάνεσθαι εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν, μὴ ὑπολάβητε αὐτοὺς Χριστιανούς ὥσπερ οὐδὲ Ἰουδαίους.—*Dialog. c. Tryph.* p. 307, ed. Paris.

<sup>2</sup> τὰς μὲν τῶν εὐσεβῶν ἐν κρείττονί ποι χώρῳ μένειν, τὰς δὲ ἀδίκους καὶ πονηρὰς ἐν χείρονι, τὸν τῆς κρίσεως ἐκδεχομένης χρόνον τότε.—*id.* 223.

<sup>3</sup> αἱ ψυχὰι ἀπέρχονται εἰς . . . τὸν τόπον τὸν ὠρισμένον αὐταῖς

ing how our Lord observed the law of the dead, and went to the place "where the souls of the dead were," and he anticipates the same lot for them: "For the Disciple is not above his Master, but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master."<sup>1</sup>

There was an anonymous book written, some think by one of the above Fathers, others by a contemporary, on "the Nature of the Universe,"<sup>2</sup> which deals at length with the Intermediate State, showing that the souls of the righteous and unrighteous were detained in Hades, but not in the same place; there was but one passage into it, but when the gate was passed the one went to the right hand into Abraham's bosom, the other to the left, to a place of misery, and that they remained there until the time appointed by God.

Tertullian wrote a treatise, *De Paradiso*, which  
Tertullian. has been unhappily lost, for the express purpose of showing that "all souls were sequestered in Hades till the day of the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ κεῖ μεχρὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως φοιτῶσι περιμένονσαι τὴν ἀνάστασιν.—*Adv. Hær. v. xxxi. 2.*

<sup>1</sup> S. LUKE vi. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Besides the above it was assigned to Origen and Caius. Pearson quotes several extracts from it.—Cf. *Creed*, Art. v. 239, notes. For the above quot. cf. Galland. *Bibl.* pp. t. 2, p. 451.

<sup>3</sup> Quo constituimus omnem animam apud Inferos sequestrari in diem Domini.—*De Anima*, c. 55.

Lactantius says, "Let no man think that souls Lactantius.  
are judged immediately after death : all are detained  
in one common place of safe-keeping until the time  
comes when the Supreme Judge shall make his  
scrutiny." <sup>1</sup>

S. Hilary speaks very decidedly : "As the day S. Hilary.  
of judgment is the eternal award either of joy or  
punishment, so the hour of death orders the interval  
for every man by its own laws, consigning him either  
to Abraham or to punishment until the judgment ;" <sup>2</sup>  
and in another place he says that all the faithful are  
reserved for the interval in the safe-keeping of the  
Lord in Abraham's bosom, and guarded from the  
intrusion of ungodly souls by an interposing gulf,  
till the times come for their entrance into heaven. <sup>3</sup>

Lastly, S. Augustine testifies that "during the S. August-  
tine.  
interval between death and the final resurrection  
men's souls are kept in hidden receptacles, according

<sup>1</sup> Nec tamen quisquam putet animas post mortem protinus  
judicari ; omnes in una communique custodia detinentur donec  
tempus adveniat quo maximus Iudex faciat examen.—*Instit. Div.*  
iii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Iudicii dies vel beatitudinis retributio est aeterna vel pœnæ ;  
tempus vero mortis habet unumquemque suis legibus, dum ad  
iudicium unumquemque aut Abraham reservat aut pœna.—*In*  
*Ps. ii. ad. fin.*

<sup>3</sup> In sinu scilicet interim Abrahæ collocati ; quo adire impios,  
interjectum chaos inhibet quousque introeundi sursum in regnum  
cœlorum tempus adveniat.—*In Ps. cxx.*

as they severally deserve rest or trouble.”<sup>1</sup> It follows upon this testimony, which might have been largely increased<sup>2</sup> if necessary, that the Westminster divines committed an egregious blunder in practically obliterating the Intermediate State, and showed the most profound ignorance both of Scripture and of primitive literature. It remains for us now to consider how far, from what has been revealed, we may form conceptions of the mode of life in which the souls of the faithful pass their time of waiting in Paradise.

<sup>1</sup> Tempus quod inter hominis mortem et ultimam resurrectionem interpositum est, animas abditis receptaculis continet, sicut unaquæque digna est vel requie vel aerumna.—*Enchirid. ad Laur.* cix.

<sup>2</sup> TERT. *adv. Marc.* iv. 31. ORIGEN, *de Princip.* iv. 23. HIP-POLYTUS, *Frag. adv. Græcos*, i. S. HIERON. *in Os.* xiii. 14, S. AUG. *de Civ. Dei*, xii. 9. *Epist.* lvii. or clxxxvii.

## CHAPTER III.

### Jewish Conceptions of the State after Death.

VARIOUS opinions have been held about the extent of knowledge possessed by the ancient Hebrews on the doctrine of immortality and the state after death. The revelation of it seems to have been vouchsafed gradually from the beginning. We are able to trace it running like a thread through the pages of the Old Testament, hardly noticeable at first, but becoming clearer and clearer, till at last it stands out conspicuous in its distinctness. The revelation of future life gradually developed.

The Patriarchs must have gathered from the translation of Enoch, whom "God took," that death was not the end of all things. The Israelites in Egypt would learn something from the continued relation of God to their fathers, expressed in the title by which He revealed Himself, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."<sup>1</sup>

In the case of some favoured ones, their spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Ex. iii. 15 ; iv. 5.

instincts seem at times almost to have enabled them to anticipate the full revelation. What, for instance, could appear clearer, if read by itself, than Job's declaration of his certainty that his Redeemer would vindicate his cause hereafter, and grant him the Vision of God?<sup>1</sup> What again more assuring than David's assertion that at the great awakening he would be satisfied with the likeness of God,<sup>2</sup> or that, though the wicked should have death for their shepherd, yet God would redeem *his* soul from the power of the grave?<sup>3</sup> But there are signs that even these apparently positive utterances were not based on a distinct revelation; had they been so, both Job and David were guilty of culpable disbelief: the one, when he cried in the depth of despondency, "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. . . . But man dieth and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"<sup>4</sup> the other when he complained in his sickness, "In death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave, who shall give Thee thanks?"<sup>5</sup>

JOB xix. 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xvii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xlix. 14, 15. A.V. "Death shall feed on them." The above is the rendering of the LXX. version, and is far more forcible. LXX. *θανατὸς ποιμανεῖ αὐτοῦς*. Symm. *νεμήσει αὐτοῦς*. Jerome, *pascet eos*.

<sup>4</sup> JOB xiv. 7, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. vi. 5.



The prophets, who were expressly appointed to declare the Will of God, exhibit no trace of such ambiguity, but speak with unfaltering voice. Hosea<sup>1</sup> and Isaiah<sup>2</sup> unfolded the truth with increasing clearness, till at last Ezekiel,<sup>3</sup> with his vivid description of the valley of dry bones, and the definite language of Daniel,<sup>4</sup> satisfy us that a full realisation of the resurrection-life had taken possession of the people. There is a somewhat similar correspondence in their conceptions of the Intermediate State. At first those who believed that the soul would survive the shock of death, thought, for the most part, that it would pass to an invisible place of gloom and sadness: one, moreover, in which the condition of the disembodied soul admitted of no change or amelioration.

Distinct  
revelation  
of the  
prophets.

Earliest  
views of the  
Interme-  
diate State.

Here and there, it is true, we see a ray of sunlight let in upon the darkness, when the historian records the fall of some hero of the people, such as Abraham or Moses or Jacob, and hints at the joy of reunion with his ancestry by telling that "he was gathered to his fathers."<sup>5</sup> David

<sup>1</sup> HOS. xiii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> ISA. xxvi. 19.

<sup>3</sup> EZEK. xxxvii. 1-14.

<sup>4</sup> DAN. xii. 2.

<sup>5</sup> GEN. xv. 15; xxv. 8, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 29. DEUT. xxxii. 50. The Targum of Jonathan interprets the expression in a two-fold sense, of the body lying down with his fathers, and the soul

Character-  
ised by  
gloom and  
sadness.

again finds comfort in the thought that in death he would be reunited to his lost child.<sup>1</sup> But for the vast majority who died, the grave or the region to which they passed was "the land of forgetfulness," where there is no "knowledge nor wisdom," for "all things are forgotten." Job<sup>2</sup> could regard it as the "land of darkness and the shadow of death." To the Psalmist<sup>3</sup> it was a place where the voice of praise and thanksgiving was for ever hushed; to Hezekiah<sup>4</sup> it was a pit of despair, where they that go down "cannot hope for Thy truth." To others,<sup>5</sup> again, it was a yawning gulf, or an insatiable monster of remorseless cruelty and all-devouring rapacity.

Then there is another dreary aspect in which the Jews regarded the state after death; according to the earlier belief, the region into which the disembodied soul passed was the same for all; there was no distinction between the just and the unjust; all alike went to one place; it was "a land of darkness . . . without any order, and where the light is as dark-

being laid up in the treasury of life with his fathers: but in some cases, *e.g.*, in Abraham's and Moses', the body was not buried in the sepulchre of their fathers.

<sup>1</sup> 2 SAM. xii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> JOB x. 22.

<sup>3</sup> PS. vi. 5.

<sup>4</sup> ISA. xxxviii. 18.

<sup>5</sup> PROV. i. 12; xxx. 16. SONG OF SOLOMON viii. 6. ISA. v. 14.

ness.”<sup>1</sup> Even when man’s conscience asserted itself and protested against the possibility of an equal lot for good and bad beyond the grave, Sheol was still only a loss and deprivation compared with the happiness of their earthly life. Once and again, it is true, the candle of the Lord seemed for a moment to illuminate the darkness of their condition, for we hear David rejoicing in the conviction that God would not abandon his soul to Hades for ever, nor suffer the saints whom He loved “to *see*,” that is, perhaps, in Jewish phraseology, to abide in “corruption.”<sup>2</sup>

After the Captivity the conception of the Intermediate State underwent an important change. Amid the troubles of their earthly lot the minds of men became more fixed on the future, and greater prominence was given to the idea of a judgment to come; and in proportion as the certainty of this was realised their thoughts of Hades took more definite shape. They felt that it could not possibly

The dawn  
of brighter  
hopes.

<sup>1</sup> JOB x. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ιδεῖν τὴν ζωὴν*—not only to live, but to continue to live. It might have been said of Our Lord’s Body that the process of disintegration did not even commence, but not of David’s, though the Jews had or invented a tradition that it was preserved from decay. “Corruption” is, according to LXX., *διαφθοράν*: a commoner meaning of the Hebrew word is “the pit,” but then the prediction was not fulfilled in either case, for both David and our Blessed Lord were buried.

be a promiscuous place of assembly for all who died ; if the time of probation closed with death, the result of it could not henceforth be ignored, though the final award might be still delayed. Hence arose the belief in an anticipatory separation of the good and bad, and the division of Hades into two localities, the higher and the lower. As time went on numerous subdivisions were created. If in the future heaven there were to be "many mansions," so it might be also in the Intermediate State. Indications of such a plurality of places were found in the language of the Old Testament ; at least it was so interpreted to meet the later views. For instance, in Isaiah :<sup>1</sup> "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust : for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." The Jews of our Lord's time<sup>2</sup> understood the former part as referring to the final resurrection, and mystically interpreted the "chambers" as signifying the different receptacles of the souls of the righteous, where they awaited

<sup>1</sup> xxvi. 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. BULL'S *Works*, vol. i. p. 64.

the day of judgment. So also in the Apocryphal Book of Esdras <sup>1</sup> we meet with the same expression, where the souls of the righteous, almost echoing the cry of the souls which S. John saw "under the altar," are represented "in their chambers" as asking, "How long shall I hope on this fashion? When cometh the fruit of the floor of our reward? And unto these things Uriel, the Archangel, gave them answer and said, Even when the number of seeds is filled in you." The souls of men are no longer mingled as on earth, but each one goes to his own chamber or appropriate state.

Then we meet in Rabbinical writings and elsewhere, with a variety of names for the separate localities, and to each, in a greater or less degree, there seems to have been assigned some special and befitting significance. At times it appears that they were considered, as we have said, to indicate different localities, but the truer conception is that they

<sup>1</sup> 2 ESDR. iv. 35, 36. In the lately recovered portion of this Book there is a very sharp antithesis drawn between the state of the faithful and unfaithful in the Intermediate State: "Those who have despised and not kept the way of the Most High" will be in a condition of ceaseless pain and sorrow; but those who have observed His laws "will be kept in rest" till He shall renew the Creation. This last portion is referred to by some of the early Fathers. A MS. of it of the ninth century was discovered by Mr. Bensly, Fellow of Caius College, Cambridge, not long ago at Amiens.

Different  
conditions  
expressed  
by different  
titles.

were designed to express different states or conditions of happiness or misery.

On the one side,<sup>1</sup> we read of Paradise or the Garden of Eden, of Abraham's bosom, of souls under the Altar or under the Throne of Glory.

On the other side, of Hades<sup>2</sup> or sometimes Gehenna.<sup>3</sup> Before any distinction was made between the receptacles of the good and the bad, the general term for the Intermediate State was Sheol.<sup>4</sup> Its etymology implies simply that it was a hollow or low-lying place, the vault beneath, as the firmament was the vault above, hence the Latin equivalent for it is either *infern*i or *inferna*. It is used also in the more limited sense of the grave or pit, in which the body was laid. It is worthy of note that it was not employed by the Jews, after they conceived of

The  
Hebrew  
Sheol.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. WETSTEIN and SCHÖTTGEN, *Heb. Hor. in Luc.* xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, the rich man lifted up his eyes "in Hades."—S. LUKE xvi. 23. Often called "the depth of Hades," to indicate that all Hades was not the place of the wicked.

<sup>3</sup> More generally regarded as the final place of torment: the scene of the "lake of fire." There is no good authority for Rabbi Kimchi's assertion that the figure of the undying worm was suggested from its being the place of refuse for the city. It was the scene of the cruel worship of the fire-gods.

<sup>4</sup> Sheol occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures 65 times. In the Auth. Version it is rendered Hell, or grave, each 31 times, pit 3 times. In the R. V. it is treated as a proper name, and left untranslated 30 times; it is translated Hell and grave, each 15 times, and pit 5 times. In the LXX., it is nearly always rendered "Αδης.

separation after death, to represent the abode of those who were in a state of happiness. It was invariably restricted to be the expression of their gloomiest belief.

Its natural rendering in the English language is <sup>Its equivalent in</sup> hell, which carries with it no necessary idea of English. torment or suffering; it is simply a hole that is covered over, from *hellen*, to cover or roof in,<sup>1</sup> but in modern phraseology we have taken it out of its original sphere of use, and relegated it to be the abode of lost souls, adopting the term Hades, or the unseen region, to express generally the whole spirit-world; though even here it is more commonly limited, in Christian terminology, to that part where the souls of the faithful "are in joy and felicity."

We next consider the appropriate ideas of the special designations.

<sup>1</sup> Hence, "one that covers a house with tiles or slates is called a hellier," cf. USHER's *Ans. to a Jesuit*, p. 219. This use of the word is still retained in the West of England.

## CHAPTER IV.

### Different Conditions expressed by the different Designations.

The Garden  
of Eden or  
Paradise.

WHEN the Jews conceived of the souls of the righteous as being in joy and happiness, it was not unnatural that they should designate the place in which they supposed them to abide, the Garden of Eden or Paradise. They had no higher conception of enjoyment than that which was associated with the times of man's innocence, and with the garden which the LORD had planted for his dwelling-place with His Own hand; and though he had been excluded from it for his disobedience, there were promises handed down through the history of the nation which seemed to point to his restoration to it.

In Hebrew it was the Garden of Eden, that is, the garden of delight or pleasure; but when the Alexandrine Jews made their translation of the Scriptures, finding no exact equivalent in the Greek



tongue, they used an expressive word of Persian origin, Paradise.<sup>1</sup> Henceforward, both titles were used promiscuously for the waiting-place of the righteous.

In the Talmud we read that the unseen world "is called Paradise under the signification of the Garden of Eden, which is reserved for the just."<sup>2</sup> The Chaldee Paraphrast<sup>3</sup> of the Song of Songs asserts that no man is capable of admission therein but the just, whose souls are carried thither by the hands of the angels. Those who were privileged after death to see God, and ascend into the hill of the LORD, were divided into seven classes or degrees, to each one of which the Jews said "there was allotted a proper place in the Garden of Eden."<sup>4</sup>

The Midrash of the Psalms interprets "the tree planted by the water side" of "Abraham whom God took and planted in the Garden of Eden, or Paradise." It was said of the next most highly esteemed of the Patriarchs, "our master Moses departed into the Garden of Eden."<sup>5</sup>

From these quotations we see that the titles were

<sup>1</sup> In LXX., ὁ παραδείσος τῆς τρυφῆς, cf. XENOPHON'S *Anab.* i. 2, § 7, 4, § 9, ii. 4, § 14. *Cyrop.* i. 3, § 14.

<sup>2</sup> LIGHTFOOT, *Horæ Hebraicæ*, vol. xii. 203, *S. Luc.* xxiii. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Bull, i. iii. 64.

<sup>4</sup> LIGHTF., *ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> LIGHTF., *Hor. Heb. S. Luc.* xvi. 22

employed for the most part indifferently to express one and the same locality, but there is little doubt that they were intended at times to convey separate ideas of the Intermediate State.

The  
primary  
meaning of  
Paradise.

A paradise was primarily a park or pleasure-ground, woody and well watered, with its natural beauties undestroyed. To an Oriental it would be more, far more, suggestive of rest and refreshment than the most beautiful or well-ordered garden; for though the latter contained much to delight the eye, in a hot and sultry climate nothing could be more grateful than the combination of umbrageous trees and cooling streams afforded by the former.

The  
secondary  
meaning.

This was probably the thought uppermost in the Jewish mind, till the later Palestinian Jews reverted to the image of a garden, and depicted it in most sensuous colours, with all that was alluring to the eye and sweet to the taste, with its streams, not of cooling water but of milk and honey, with its trees laden with every kind of fruit, and its hill-sides covered with lilies and roses.<sup>1</sup>

The former was the view accepted and indorsed by our Lord; no doubt there was associated with it much that was fanciful, somewhat, perhaps, even

<sup>1</sup> 2 ESDRAS ii. 19.

misleading, in the Jewish anticipation of Paradise, but the main idea was true, and He was content to adopt it in the full knowledge that through His indorsement after due correction it would find a place in the phraseology of the Church. He foresaw, doubtless, that it would soon be purged from all those conceptions of earthly and material enjoyments which attracted so greatly the mind of the Jews.

In a treatise that has been attributed to Justin Martyr<sup>1</sup> it is spoken of as a place where all faithful souls would have the vision of saints and angels, and of Christ Himself. Irenæus<sup>2</sup> dwells upon the before-mentioned fact that the life to be spent in it would recall the times of man's innocence and perfect obedience. Origen,<sup>3</sup> Tertullian,<sup>4</sup> S. Chrysostom,<sup>5</sup> and others,<sup>6</sup> freely adopt the term in their writings.

Patristic  
use of the  
term.

There can be little doubt that the prominent idea, brought out in the numerous notices of Paradise, both Jewish and Christian, but more especially the latter, was that of rest and refreshment; and it is

<sup>1</sup> ἔνθα συντυχία τε καὶ θέα ἀγγέλων τε καὶ ἀρχαγγέλων κατ' ὁπτασίαν δὲ καὶ Σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ. *Quæst. et Resp. ad Orthodox.* lxxv.

<sup>2</sup> *Adv. Hær.* v. 5.    <sup>3</sup> *de Princip.* ii. 5.    <sup>4</sup> *de Anima*, 55.

<sup>5</sup> *Hom.* i., ii., *de Cruce et Latron*, § 2.

<sup>6</sup> S. CYPRIAN, *de Mortal.* § ult. S. AMBROSE, *de bono Mortis*, c. xii.

Our Lord's  
use of it.

worthy of notice that this sense is most obvious in the solitary instance <sup>1</sup> in which our Lord is recorded to have used it.

It was to one who was racked by pain, and consumed by the intolerable thirst which is inseparable from death by crucifixion, and seeking for comfort and relief, that He held out the promise, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It would be difficult to conceive of any assurance more calculated to alleviate the unrest and agony that he was then enduring.

Such, then, being the leading conception of Paradise, we pass to another term that was used with equal frequency alike by Jew and Christian, "Abraham's bosom."

Abraham's  
bosom.

The mention of Abraham suggests in the first instance continuity in the covenant of God and union with the Father of the faithful; but the figure of Abraham's bosom or lap carries on the thoughts to a fellowship of joy and pleasure. The imagery is borrowed from the feast or social meal at which the Jews were wont to recline rather than sit and to lay their heads each on his neighbour's lap.<sup>2</sup> It was accounted a mark of the closest intercourse,

<sup>1</sup> S. LUKE xxiii. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Sinus præsupponit convivium. BENDEL, S. Luke xvi. 22.

and the recollection of the high privilege enjoyed by the favoured Apostle was perpetuated by the title that was given to him, *ὁ ἐπιστήθιος*, "the one that lay on the breast." <sup>1</sup>

Such companionship with Abraham was held out as the reward of every righteous Jew hereafter. When the Rabbis wished to describe the condition after death of Judah, who for his surpassing piety was designated "the holy," they summed it all up in the brief but pregnant assertion: "this day he rests in the bosom of Abraham." <sup>2</sup>

There is a touching story preserved in the Apocryphal history,<sup>3</sup> which shows what was considered the highest bliss for a departing soul. After the mother of the seven martyrs had seen six of her children put to death before her eyes, she entreated the Emperor to spare her the pain of witnessing the death of her latest born, but finding that he was inexorable, she clasped her best beloved one in her arms and with passionate words cried out in the anguish of her soul, "Go thou, my child, to Abraham, thy father."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Suicer's Thesaurus. In Typico Sabæ, c. xxiii. p. 50. In Menologio, mense Septembri, die xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> LIGHT., *ut supra*.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Macc. vii. It is recorded also, with the addition here given, in the *Midrash Echah*. 68. 1.

The figure indicative of social inter course.

Just as our Blessed Lord did not hesitate to adopt the phraseology of the Jews in designating the future state of the blessed, Paradise, so again He accepted this other imagery, and spoke of Lazarus as being "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."<sup>1</sup> It bespoke a condition of social intercourse with the faithful; and it had a peculiarly appropriate significance in the one passage where He adopted it to describe the present destiny of that poor outcast from society, who had been laid as a beggar at a rich man's gate, and had known in this world nothing of the plenty which the figure of a feast would at once suggest, and which was now denied to him who had so largely enjoyed it in this life. Though the exact figure is not repeated, the same idea underlay the assurance that hereafter many "shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>2</sup>

The frequency of the term in Patristic writings.

The expression passed into the regular terminology of the early Church and was very largely used by the Fathers. Tertullian called it "a temporary receptacle for the souls of the faithful, wherein is even now delineated an image of the future, and where is given some clear foresight of the glory of both

<sup>1</sup> S. LUKE xvi. 22.

<sup>2</sup> S. MATT. viii. 11.

judgments ; ”<sup>1</sup> and again, “an interval of rest, until the consummation of all things shall complete the resurrection.”<sup>2</sup> Origen spoke of it as one of the states, “the many mansions,” “through which the soul of the believer passes before it comes to the river which maketh glad the city of God.”<sup>3</sup> S. Augustine dwells with satisfaction on the thought of his dear departed friend Nebridius, “that he is now living in the bosom of Abraham.”<sup>4</sup> Endless quotations might be given to illustrate its widespread use, but these will suffice. Its special significance is to describe the condition of faithful souls as in the enjoyment of blest companionship and spiritual sympathy.

Another Jewish designation of the Intermediate State was “under the Throne of Glory.” It was said that when the angel of death was sent by God to fetch the soul of Moses and was unable to do so, God Himself took him and “treasured him up under

Under the  
Throne of  
Glory.

<sup>1</sup> Temporale aliquod animarum fidelium receptaculum, in quo jam deliniatur futuri imago ac candida quædam utriusque judicii prospiciatur.—*Adv. Marc.* iv. xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Interim refrigerium præbituram animabus justorum donec consummatio rerum resurrectionem omnium plenitudine mercedis expungat.—*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Per quas transiens anima Deo credens et perveniens usque ad flumen illud quod calificat civitatem Dei.—*Hom.* xxvi. in *Numb.* cap. xxxi.

<sup>4</sup> *Confessions*, ix. 3.

the Throne of Glory"; and in the same treatise it is added that Moses was not alone there, but that the souls of other righteous men were stored "under the Throne of Glory."<sup>1</sup>

Under the  
Altar.

Now it is very probable that this expression is almost synonymous with that which is found in the Revelation, "under the Altar," for the Jews regarded the Altar always as the throne or seat of the Divine Majesty. Indeed so strongly did they believe this that it has been asserted that the Sanhedrim was bidden to hold its sittings near to the Altar, in order that the proximity to the Divine Presence might fill the members of the Council with awe, and ensure a righteous and impartial judgment.

There is yet another thought suggested by the Altar. As the central point of religious worship, as the place to which God comes to receive the offerings of men, and that from which He dispenses His gifts to them, as the spot, in short, where He might always be found, the Altar was commonly held to be a place of refuge; and "to flee to the Altar," or "to lay hold on the horns of the Altar," was to put one's-self within the sanctuary and protection of God.

When then the Jews spoke of souls being "under the Throne of Glory," or "under the Altar," they

<sup>1</sup> LIGHTF., *ut supra*.



intended to teach that they were in the safe-keeping of God Himself, or, as they were wont to say, "in His treasury or storehouse." They could abide safely and no harm could reach them, for they were in peace and security<sup>1</sup> in the hands of God. Hence we read, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them."<sup>2</sup> Such are the varied conceptions of the state of the faithful after death.

<sup>1</sup> So Tertullian writes: "Interim sub altari martyrum animæ placidum quiescunt."—*Scorpiace*, xii.

<sup>2</sup> WISDOM, iii. 1.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Disembodied Soul in a State of Consciousness.

IT might seem to be quite unnecessary to argue at any length in favour of the belief that the soul continues in a conscious condition<sup>1</sup> during the interval between death and judgment, but the history of the past, as well as present experience, forbids us to assume anything like its general acceptance.

Early testimony to the soul's consciousness after death.

Very little was said upon the subject in the primitive Church. Tertullian,<sup>2</sup> in treating at length on the nature of the soul, felt impelled to vindicate its consciousness after death. "What," he asks, "is to take place in the interval between death and judgment? Shall we sleep? Why, souls do not sleep, even when men are alive: it is the province of bodies to sleep." With one or two other notices of little importance the matter was not dealt with, as far as we know, by the early Fathers.

<sup>1</sup> This subject has been touched upon in *After Death* in chap. iii., but it is thought necessary to enter upon it more fully here.

<sup>2</sup> *De Anima*, lviii. *De Resur. Carnis*, 17.

In the Middle Ages, however, it was so strongly maintained that the soul falls asleep in death and will not awake till the day of the resurrection, that it was brought under discussion in no less than three Ecclesiastical Councils.<sup>1</sup> Opinions differed widely as to the nature and extent of unconsciousness. The extreme form which the heresy took was that of the Anabaptists, against whom Calvin wrote his *Psychopannychia*,<sup>2</sup> in which he combated the belief that the soul lay throughout the Intermediate State in a condition of utter darkness and oblivion. The "soul-sleepers"<sup>3</sup> maintained that the destruction of the bodily organs reduced the soul to a state of powerlessness; and this was very much the idea of the Socinians and Arminians,<sup>4</sup> who limited themselves to denying all external activity of the soul in its separate life. The most moderate form of it was that accepted by Luther,<sup>5</sup> who not only maintained that there must have been numerous exceptions, such as, Elias, Moses, Abraham, Lazarus, those who had perished in the fires of Sodom, of whom S. Jude

Divers views on the sleep of the soul.

<sup>1</sup> Ferrara, Florence, and Trent.

<sup>2</sup> This was published in 1534 A.D. The heresy was revived in the next century by the publication of MACE'S *Mortality*. Cf. PAGITT, *Heresiography*.

<sup>3</sup> Hypnopsychites.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. DELITSCH, *Bibl. Psycholog.* vi. § iv. In Germany the chief advocate of the soul's sleep was Heyne in *Werder*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Letters* (Ed. DE WETTE), pt. ii. p. 122.

spoke as "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," and "the spirits in prison" who listened to Christ's preaching in Hades, but asserted that though souls were asleep, they still might be "capable of hearing the voices of God and the angels."<sup>1</sup>

Now notwithstanding the fact that the theory of the soul's unconsciousness has been condemned as an heretical tenet, whenever the Church has pronounced upon the subject, and despite the assertion of the Reformers that it is at variance with "the right belief declared to us in Holy Scripture,"<sup>2</sup> it has been revived in these later days; and the force with which it has been emphasised may be gathered from the following extracts taken from the writings of its chief advocates:<sup>3</sup> "It is a state of darkness, forgetfulness, unconsciousness." "The next act in the history of the believer, after he has closed his eyes in death, is opening them in resurrection to receive the reward of victory. All between is a blank."

<sup>1</sup> Distinguishing it from a *natural* sleep he writes, non sic dormit sed vigilat et patitur visiones, loquelas Angelorum et Dei. *Enarr. in Gen.* xv. DELITSCH, vi. § iv.

<sup>2</sup> "They which say that the souls of such as depart hence do sleep, being without all sense, feeling or perceiving, until the day of judgment, or affirm that the souls die with the bodies, and at the last day shall be raised up with the same, do utterly dissent from the right belief declared to us in Holy Scripture."—40th of the 42 Articles of 1553.

<sup>3</sup> CONSTABLE, *Hades*. COURTENEY, *Future State*, 252. POLLOCK, *Out of the Body*, 106.

It is true that the letter of Holy Scripture lends abundant testimony to the idea: Daniel foretells that at the Resurrection, "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake";<sup>1</sup> and in the New Testament this language is repeated frequently. Beneath the storm of violence by which the Sanhedrists assailed him, the first martyr S. Stephen "fell asleep."<sup>2</sup> Of the five hundred brethren or more, who had seen the Risen Lord, S. Paul told the Corinthians that some were "fallen asleep."<sup>3</sup> Our Blessed Lord Himself was described by the same Apostle as "the firstfruits of them that slept."<sup>4</sup> It has been said,<sup>5</sup> moreover, that it is because the souls of men will be bound in a deep sleep and have need to be awaked, that the Lord Himself will "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God."<sup>6</sup>

The language of Holy Scripture figurative

We have adopted the Scriptural phraseology into our common conversation and often speak of the dying as "falling asleep," and we call our burying-grounds "cemeteries," sleeping-places, that is, where

<sup>1</sup> DAN. xii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> ACTS vii. 60.

<sup>3</sup> 1 COR. xv. 6.

<sup>4</sup> 1 COR. xv. 20.

<sup>5</sup> This, however, is only a popular fancy, for generally the trumpet-call in Scripture is used to give an alarm or to call an assembly, rarely, if ever, to arouse from sleep. Cf. JEREM. iv. 5; JOEL ii. 1, 15.

<sup>6</sup> 1 THESS. iv. 16.

we lay our dead to rest from the turmoils of the world. There can be little doubt, however, that it is only intended as a figure of speech ; and it is a very natural one to use, as we look on the face of the dead in its calm and tranquil repose, and realise that "life's fitful fever" is over and past. Indeed we are forced to regard it as nothing more than figurative, for whenever the veil of the Intermediate State is lifted it invariably discloses the soul in a conscious condition.

The testimony of  
Isaiah.

Very little light is thrown upon the subject in the Old Testament, but there is one very remarkable scene depicted by Isaiah,<sup>1</sup> which almost necessitates his belief that the disembodied soul did not lose its consciousness. Hades was moved at the entrance of the King of Babylon ; the spirits of the dead were stirred, and those of other kings, who had gone down before him, rose from their thrones to meet him with the question, "Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?" Then they reproach him with the greatness of his ruin, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!"

Of Ezekiel. Ezekiel<sup>2</sup> again has a bold and characteristic de-

<sup>1</sup> xiv. 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> xxxi. 16, 17.

scription in which he compares the shades of the princes of the earth to the choicest trees of Eden and Lebanon, and speaks of them as "comforted in the nether parts," on hearing that the great cedar, the dreaded king of Assyria, has fallen like themselves.

It is obvious that both these descriptions are clothed in a highly poetical and imaginative dress, but the idea that underlies them cannot possibly be mistaken, and it is one that militates strongly against any conception of the state of the soul in death, which regards it as sleeping or unconscious.

In the New Testament all is made plain. The rich man and Lazarus<sup>1</sup> are both, on the authority of Christ Himself, declared to be awake and conscious in the other world: the one is sensible of the "comfort" which his altered circumstances have imparted to him; the other is mindful of his brethren whom he had left behind, and eagerly anxious to save them from sharing the doom that had befallen himself. Of the New Testament.

It was no promise of unconscious slumber in a land of oblivion which Christ held out to the robber-outlaw, as he hung upon the Cross, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."<sup>2</sup>

S. Peter<sup>3</sup> tells us that it was with all the powers

<sup>1</sup> S. LUKE xvi. 19-31.    <sup>2</sup> S. LUKE xxiii. 43.    <sup>3</sup> 1 EP. iii. 18, 19.

of His human spirit “quickened,” that Christ passed into the unseen world and delivered His message, not to souls that were sleeping in unconsciousness but awake to hear the glad tidings He brought them.

It was no land of sleeping souls to which S. Paul passed in that awful rapture, where he heard a language which it baffled his comprehension to describe,—heard, it would seem, the souls of men in spiritual conversation on the awful verities of the other world, “unspeakable words which it is not possible (marg. A.V.) for a man to utter.”<sup>1</sup>

Again it was an undoubted conviction that he would be able to realise the Divine Presence of his Lord, and enjoy the freest communion of spirit with spirit, which cheered the same Apostle, as the fashion of this world seemed to be passing like a pageant from his sight, “having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.”<sup>2</sup>

And yet once more, the souls which S. John<sup>3</sup> saw “under the altar” were not asleep, for they yearned for something yet to come, and cried in passionate longing for the hastening of the time when their desire should be fulfilled.

We may draw some corroborative evidence of no

<sup>1</sup> 2 COR. xii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> PHIL. i. 23.

<sup>3</sup> REV. vi. 9, 10.



little import from the manner in which death is spoken of in the New Testament. It is nowhere considered to create such a violent break in existence as the removal of the soul to a condition of torpor would indicate. It is no wild catastrophe that convulses nature and then is followed, like the storm, by a silence that can be felt; but it is represented everywhere by figures of a far different kind.

It is the breaking up of a home,<sup>1</sup> the striking of a tent, the weighing anchor and gliding out of harbour for another voyage;<sup>2</sup> it is something in short which seems to send the soul forth on a fresh enterprise, something to be looked forward to as a translation to a better sphere. If it had been the passage to a state of insensibility and suspended consciousness, we should have heard nothing of that strong overmastering desire in S. Paul that was sufficient to conquer his love of this earthly life, because it inspired him with the hope of a freer and more intensified being in the Intermediate State.

The meaning of the figures under which death is described.

<sup>1</sup> 2 COR. v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 2 TIM. iv. 6.

## CHAPTER VI.

### Mental and Intellectual Development in the Spiritual State.

THE retention of consciousness in the Intermediate State carries with it of necessity the full possession of all other faculties of the mind, for though in this life they are exercised through the medium of bodily organs, they are so far from being dependent upon these, that there is good reason to believe that they will be largely developed when freed from their restraining influence.

The retention of memory.

Let us take memory and knowledge by way of illustration; and first, memory. There is a strong *a priori* argument in favour of the exercise of this hereafter, because it appears to be absolutely indispensable for the preservation of our personal identity. It is that which connects by an indissoluble chain the past and the present, the new life and the old. ||

Memory was the first of the faculties appealed to by Abraham in his reply to the rich man in the

parable, "Son, remember";<sup>1</sup> we have it then on the authority of our Lord that it is possible in the state after death to recall what has taken place before it.

Again, we have only to realise what it is that creates forgetfulness, to understand how in the spiritual world the power of memory must become intensified. On the one hand the physical organs, by which we think and reflect while we are in the body, are imperfect; they are liable to fail us through disease or some other of the countless infirmities to which flesh is heir; so that the grasp of the mind is weakened and lets things go.

On the other hand memory is placed at a disadvantage by the manifold distractions and absorbing interests, which are the inevitable accompaniments of the life that is passed in this present sphere. We may gather something of the distracting influence of the material world upon the thinking principle by noticing how vastly it becomes strengthened, as soon as it is withdrawn from it. When we are shut out from the world, as the saying is, we find the mind becomes absorbed and wrapt up, as it were, in itself; it loses consciousness of what is passing around, and dwells more and more upon the past

<sup>1</sup> S. LUKE xvi. 25.

and the future. So it is, when a man is laid upon a bed of sickness, and loses his interest in the ordinary pleasures of life and its common diversions. Most of us can remember, no doubt, with what vivid clearness the past came back to us, when so circumstanced, so that we seemed, as it were, to be living it all over again.

Instances  
of marvel-  
lously  
quickened  
memories.

We have read of the prisoner, long immured in a solitary cell, shut in by bar and bolt from the outer world, losing all interest in the present, while the past becomes an intense reality to him. He goes over and over the days that are passed, remembers and recalls from the wastes of oblivion the long-forgotten scenes of childhood or youth, till he almost wonders at the strength of his memory.

We have heard, too, of the drowning man, saved in the supreme moment, when all hope seemed to have fled, as the spirit was on the point of emancipation from the burden of the flesh ; we have heard of such an one telling how the scroll of his whole life was suddenly unfolded before him, and everything came back with an awful distinctness and with inconceivable rapidity. We have heard too how at the same time each act as it appeared before him has seemed to carry with it a consciousness whether

it were right or whether it were wrong ;—the review and the verdict almost simultaneous.

It often creates perplexing thoughts, and even staggers our faith, when we try to realise how it will all be when on the great day of judgment the Books will be opened, and we shall be able, as Scripture<sup>1</sup> leads us to expect, to give an account for ourselves of all that we did amiss in our earthly life. Here is at least a partial solution of the difficulty. Such a marvellous review of the past as the prisoner or the drowning man has taken, is a foretaste of that wonderfully quickened and intensified power of memory, which will make the last Assize a possibility, and enable men, who in this life cannot remember the acts even of a single day, to recall the deeds done in the body, yea, every idle word and unholy thought of three-score years and ten, and that, it may be, countless centuries after their earthly life has closed.

Then look at knowledge. As one of God's greatest gifts, it is natural to expect that it will be perfected with the rest of man's being. Knowledge is the apprehension of the truth in its manifoldness, and all its unsearchable treasures are laid up in the Being of Him Who declared Himself to be the

The increase of knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> S. MATT. xii. 36. ROM. xiv. 12.

impersonation of truth. In the interval, then, of absorbing contemplation, when the soul will live in the light of Jesus Christ, in Whose light "we shall see light," and drink in knowledge at His lips, from Whom nothing is hidden, there must be an ever-growing development and a more and more complete apprehension, because all that could "let or hinder" it will have been taken away, and the corruptible body will be no longer able, as the *Book of Wisdom* says, to "weigh down the mind that museth on many things."<sup>1</sup>

The evidence of the Talmud.

There is a striking testimony in the Talmud<sup>2</sup> to the expectation of an ever-increasing knowledge after death, in commenting on the saying of the Psalmist, "they go from strength to strength." These are the words: "Wise men reach forward without rest both in this world and in the world to come." Indeed, the saying was considered almost proverbial among the Jews. Irenæus<sup>3</sup> echoes it when he says, "some things we can explain by the favour of God, but some will be reserved for God Himself, not only in the present world but also in that which

<sup>1</sup> ix. 15.

<sup>2</sup> b. *Berakhoth*, 64, a. *Moëd Katan*. 29, a.

<sup>3</sup> ἔνια μὲν ἐπιλύομεν κατὰ χάριν θεοῦ, ἔνια δὲ ἀνακείσεται τῷ θεῷ καὶ οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τῷ νυνὶ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι, ἵνα αἰεὶ μὲν ὁ θεὸς διδάσκη, ἄνθρωπος δὲ διὰ παντὸς μαθήνη παρὰ θεοῦ.—*Adv. Hær.* ii. xxviii. 3.

is to come, that God may be always teaching us, and that man may be for ever learning at God's mouth."

S. Paul has given us a glimpse of what will be possible hereafter out of his own experience. It was when admitted into the world of spiritual existences that he says that he "heard unspeakable words which it is not possible (marg. A.V.) for a man to utter."<sup>1</sup> What reached his ear transcended all earthly knowledge and finite comprehension.

S. Paul's  
teaching.

Again, in another passage he prepares us for a vast amplification of mental powers by drawing a contrast between the two states: "now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." The dimness of our present vision is emphasised in the original language<sup>2</sup> by the use of a double figure, which is obscured, if not lost, in the translation. Under the one figure he shows that here we can see things as though they were reflected in those dim metallic mirrors which the ancients used, where the likeness was always blurred and distorted. Under the other he intimates that we cannot now discern things at once, because they are put before us like an unsolved ænigma, needing time and labour to unravel and interpret. But hereafter these draw-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.—βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι.

backs and impediments will be removed ; there will no longer be anything either to obscure or mystify, but the unveiled brightness of the eternal truth will meet us "face to face."

Then he adds still further in illustration of the difference, "now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known";<sup>1</sup> now, the clouds of ignorance break only here and there, and none but a few favoured ones are permitted to see the sunlit spots of the unattainable truth, but then every cloud will be swept away, and we shall gaze into the very depths of Wisdom, and look her through and through, even as the all-seeing eye of God has searched in life into every corner of our innermost being.

We are not justified in asserting, with the same confidence, that this development will extend to an increased acquaintance with the mysteries of science and other branches of knowledge and philosophy which engage the highest intellects in this life, or that men of the greatest genius may find further scope for the exercise of their peculiar gifts, and be able to illustrate much that was dark before, and disentangle perplexities which baffled their earthly

Uncertainty touching the continuance of scientific knowledge hereafter.

<sup>1</sup> τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσμαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην, then shall I know fully as also I have been known fully, *i.e.* with the perfect knowledge of God.



endeavours. There is certainly some degree of probability that it will be so; for if we allow that the pursuit of such knowledge is inspired by God, it is most difficult to believe that it can only serve a brief and transient purpose, or to doubt that what He has given us to occupy so much of our time and thought in this sphere of probation and preparatory training, must have an eternal interest.

Of course, it may be said that S. Paul, in speaking of this consummation of knowledge, travelled beyond the Intermediate State, and was contemplating his condition in the risen and glorified life. But even if this be so, there is nothing to lead to the conclusion that he expected such a wonderful increase of his intellectual faculties to be caused by a sudden instantaneous revelation. He understood well the general principles upon which God chooses to accomplish His work, and must have realised that it would be more in accordance with these that it should be the result of gradual and progressive development through the period of waiting and undisturbed contemplation in the disembodied state.

## CHAPTER VII.

### The Purification of the Soul.

**I**T seems almost impossible to form any other conclusion than that the souls of the departed pass through some purifying process between death and judgment. By far the majority of those who die are imperfect; they are not deserving of hell, but, at the same time, are quite unfit for heaven. Our Lord Himself asserted that the Beatific Vision is reserved for those alone who are pure in heart.<sup>1</sup>

The need of purification after death.

Again, it was declared as one of the characteristics of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, which S. John saw in vision, that there should "in no wise enter into it anything that defileth," or anything that is unclean.<sup>2</sup> In heaven the saints will enjoy the direct unhindered sight of God the Father in the fulness of His glory; this, the highest blessedness, is reserved for the risen and glorified state, when they will enter into the joy of their Lord, when they will see God "as He is,"<sup>3</sup> as the angels

The Divine Presence in Paradise different from the Beatific Vision.

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτὴν πᾶν κοινόν, REV. xxi. 27.

<sup>3</sup> 1 S. JOHN iii. 2.

behold His face.<sup>1</sup> It is necessary thus to distinguish clearly what is meant by the Beatific Vision, which is reserved for the final state, whereas it is again and again implied that the souls of the righteous realise the Divine Presence in Paradise. The Vision of God, which has been vouchsafed to men, and to which S. Paul looked when he spoke of departing and being "with the Lord," was that of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity; the First Person dwells, and will dwell, "in the light which no man can approach unto, Whom no man hath seen nor can see,"<sup>2</sup> until the full manifestation of His glory at the last great day.

It follows from this that every one who dies with the blemishes and stains of a sinful nature uneffaced, even though he may have received pardon and forgiveness, will obviously require spiritual cleansing and purification. It has been authoritatively pronounced to be the indispensable qualification for admission to the Vision of God.

<sup>1</sup> S. MATT. xviii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 TIM. vi. 16. The Roman Church resisted the teaching of the Greek Bishops, who maintained, at the Council of Florence, A.D. 1439, that the Beatific Vision has not yet been vouchsafed to any of the saints. This belief has been stereotyped by the decree on the Invocation of Saints at the Council of Trent, Sess. xxv., but Patristic testimony, with the rarest exceptions, is adverse to the Roman view: cf. *After Death*, pp. 219-227.

How, then, and where, is the defiling touch of sin to be removed, and its disfigurement wholly wiped out?

The common belief is, that at death the soul which dies in a state of grace is freed at once and for ever from all the impurity and sinfulness which clung to it in the flesh, and that it is so completely cleansed, that it may forthwith, if need be, enter upon the Vision of Him Who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." But such a theory invests a mere physical process with that sanctifying influence which can only be exercised through the operation of the will.

The supposition that the soul is purified in death.

It cannot be objected that it is pardoning grace, not the act of dying, which effects sanctification, because the experience of life contradicts it. How few penitents there are whose conscience tells them that, simultaneously with a sense of remitted guilt, they have obtained deliverance also from the power of sin! It is the common heritage of most men to have still to bear, though it may be in ever-decreasing force, the burden of sinful tendencies; to be found all their after-life struggling against the old temptations. We dare not, it is true, limit the power of omnipotence to "fulfil a long time in a short time,"<sup>1</sup> and to efface at once the results

Purification a gradual process.

<sup>1</sup> WISD. iv. 13.

of a whole life ; but general observation shows that stains which have been gradually contracted are for the most part gradually removed ; and reason suggests that man's cleansing after death will bear at least some relationship to his cleansing in this life.<sup>1</sup>

Now, there is abundant evidence to be drawn alike from Scripture and Patristic writings touching some ordeal of purification through which all men are destined to pass, before they can be admitted to the Presence of God. In the Gospels it is said that "every one shall be salted with fire";<sup>2</sup> it is indorsed in the Epistles, "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."<sup>3</sup> Neither was this the first intimation of such a purification, for the prophets had predicted it. Isaiah<sup>4</sup> spoke of a "spirit of burning" for the purgation of Jerusalem, and the washing away of the filth of the daughter of Zion, in preparation for the coming of the LORD. Malachi<sup>5</sup> had presented the same thought under the figure of a refiner presiding over his furnace and watching the process, as the heat of the flame separated the alloy, and restored to man the reflexion of the image in which he was created.

A fiery  
ordeal fore-  
told in  
Scripture.

<sup>1</sup> It might be urged that the idea of sudden or instantaneous cleansing, when carried to its logical result, destroys free-will : for to be cleansed is to have the will conformed to the will of God.

<sup>2</sup> S. MARK ix. 49.    <sup>3</sup> 1 COR. iii. 13.    <sup>4</sup> iv. 4.    <sup>5</sup> iii. 3.

Spoken of  
by the  
Fathers.

In most of these passages it will be seen that there is a generally accepted reference to the day of judgment, and in consequence, we find that the early Fathers taught almost by common consent, that the revelation of that day would be in fire, and that none would be exempted from the severity of its test.

Clement of Alexandria,<sup>1</sup> speaking of the purification of sinful souls, says that it will not be by "all-devouring and common fire," but by that "discriminating fire which will penetrate the soul as it passes through it."

Both Origen and S. Ambrose held that, as all the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, so all men would pass through the fire of judgment; and that as the Egyptians were drowned, while Moses and the Israelites escaped, so at the last day "the ungodly would be plunged into the lake of burning fire, but good men . . . should be able to quench the fierce flames." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> φάμεν δέ ἡμεῖς ἀγιάζειν τὸ πῦρ οὐ τὰ κρέα ἀλλὰ τὰς ἀμαρτωλοὺς ψυχάς. πῦρ οὐ τὸ παμφάγον καὶ βάνανσον ἀλλὰ τὸ φρόνιμον λέγοντες, τὸ δι᾿ ἡμῶν διὰ ψυχῆς τῆς διερχομένης τὸ πῦρ.—*Strom.* vii., Bened. ed. 719.

<sup>2</sup> Nempe in Rubrum demersus populus est Ægyptiorum, transivit autem populus Hebræorum; Moyses pertransivit, præcipitatus est Pharo: eo modo præcipitabuntur sacrilegi in lacum ignis ardentis . . . sequamur ergo . . . ut in futurum nobis nebula

In another place we read there would be no exemption, but all would have to submit to the fiery trial “whether he be John the Evangelist, whom the Lord so loved as to say to Peter concerning him ‘*Et E* will that he tarry—what is that to thee? *Follow thou Me.*’” Some, he implies, have doubted of his death; there can be no doubt of his passage through the fire. He asserted the same again of S. John’s fellow-Apostle, “or whether he be Peter, he who received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, who walked upon the sea, must still say, ‘*We passed through fire and water, and Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*’”<sup>1</sup>

Lactantius<sup>2</sup> expected that even the just would be tried by fire, but though it would scorch the sinful, the pure would come off with impunity.

S. Hilary<sup>3</sup> said that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost must be “consummated by the fire of judgment”; and he looked with awe and dread upon *refrigeret noctis, quo sæva incendia relevare possimus.*—ORIGEN in *Psalm* xxvi., *Hom.* iii., and S. AMB., in *Ps.* xxxvi. 26.

<sup>1</sup> *Omnes oportet per ignem probari, . . . omnes oportet transire per flammam, sive ille Johannes . . . de morte ejus aliqui dubitaverunt, de transitu per ignem dubitare non possimus.*—In *Psalm* cxviii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Div. Inst.* vii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Quia baptizatis in Spiritu Sancto reliquum sit consummari igne judicii.*—*Com. in Matt.* Can. ii.

that day when, in giving account for every idle word, men "must undergo the unspent fire and those grievous penalties for freeing the soul from its sins."

S. Gregory Nazianzen,<sup>1</sup> after dwelling upon divers kinds of baptism, predicts that the last baptism, that of fire, "will be more severe, and of longer duration, which will consume the material part like hay, and destroy the light substance of every kind of sin."

Lastly, S. Augustine,<sup>2</sup> though his opinions on the subject of Purgatory were never fully formed and decided, nevertheless interpreted the expression being "saved so as by fire" of that which would be kindled on the day of judgment.

These passages, as well as others<sup>3</sup> which might be quoted if necessary, point to a very general belief, in the earliest ages of Christianity, in the existence of a cleansing ordeal for all men. They enforce the great principle laid down in Scripture, that no soul can be fitted for the Presence of God till its defile-

<sup>1</sup> τῷ τελευταίῳ βαπτίσματι τῷ ἐπιπονωτέρῳ καὶ μακροτέρῳ, ὃ ἐσθίει τὸν χόρτον, τὴν ὕλην, καὶ δαπάνη πάσης κακίας κουφότητα. —*Orat.* xxxix. *ad fin.*

<sup>2</sup> De utroque igne . . . non solum de illo æterno qui in æternum cruciaturus est impios, sed etiam de illo emendabit eos qui per ignem salvi erunt.—*In Psalm xxxvii.* 3.

<sup>3</sup> S. HIERON. *ad Jov.* ii. n. 22. S. GREGORY NYSS., *Orat. de Mortuis*, iii. p. 634. Paris ed. 1638.



ments have been effaced by a process of purification.

The conscience of man bears witness to the same necessity. If we were to ask the most saintly character we know, what he feels touching his need of cleansing, he would reply at once that even after a life-long struggle to shake off his impurities, and with all his unwavering confidence in the pardoning mercy of God, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, he is still sure that, when death approaches, he will be filled with a sense of utter unfitness for God's Presence. Till our spiritual eyesight has been purged from all the corrupting films of earthly desire, and trained in a clearer atmosphere, we can never stand the light which "no man can approach unto": we can never bear the Presence of Him Who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

The witness of the conscience to the need of purification.

The primitive Fathers kept their eyes fixed on the day of judgment as the time when this purification would be effected, but it is in perfect harmony with Catholic truth to teach that it is a prolonged process, continuing, it may be, throughout the Intermediate State till its final consummation at the end of the world. If we could remove the many subordinate evils, which have made the Roman doctrine of Purgatory a byeword, and leave only the dominant

The fire of judgment not necessarily of short duration.

idea, which underlies it, of a progressive cleansing commencing immediately after death and lasting on till the work is complete, a great end would be gained.

There is everything to lead us to expect such a thorough sifting for the soul in its disembodied state. In this present world of sense man is necessarily in a kingdom of externals, which make it easy for him to escape from self-knowledge, by reason of the distracting influences, the noise and tumult of the world around him ; but at death he enters upon a condition of a totally different kind. The veil which is now spread over the stern realities of life will be violently torn aside, and he will find himself in a kingdom of pure realities. "The soul will enter into its own inmost recesses, and resort to that which is the very foundation of life, the true substratum and source of all existence ; hence arises the purgatorial nature"<sup>1</sup> of the Intermediate State.

How far it  
involves  
physical  
pain.

One of the chief points in the Roman theory which calls for correction touches the physical pains which are supposed to be endured in the course of purification. "The sloughing off of the imperfection ingrown as it were with the soul ; the straining of

<sup>1</sup> *Der Mittelzustand im Todtenreich.* MARTENSEN'S *Christ. Dogm.*, § 276.

the soul to become free from all earthliness in her; the longing for the Vision of God, from which the unbecomingness, yet cleaving to her, still excludes her; her struggle towards the full death of the evil in her, and towards the full life of the good in her; this upstirring of her deepest and inmost self implies fire, fiery pain enough";<sup>1</sup> but Rome teaches that the agonies of Purgatory are intolerable, and are so terrible and agonising that they differ only from the pains of the damned in the fact that there is an appointed limit to the one, not to the other.<sup>2</sup>

When the soul is "with Christ," with Him, that is, "Who is altogether lovely"; and when, with those quickened powers which the spirit acquires by emancipation from the flesh, it reviews its earthly life, in the awful contrast which it will reveal between Christ's absolute purity and sinlessness, His perfect holiness and entire self-surrender and sacrifice, and its own uncleanness and rebellion and selfish indulgence, it cannot do otherwise than suffer in the retrospect, but the suffering must be of a spiritual

The suffering of a spiritual character.

<sup>1</sup> KLEE, *Dogmatik*, ii. 429-430.

<sup>2</sup> "In nothing different from these very infernal pains which the souls of castaways, together with damned spirits, do endure, saving only in this, there is an appointed limit to the one, to the other none; but for the time they last they are equal."—HOOKER, *Serm. on Pride*, iii. *ad fin.* PUSEY, *The Truth and Office of the English Church*, p. 190.

kind, such, for instance, as the penitent experiences in the consciousness of past sin, though he may have no doubt that it has been pardoned. It is, then, the spiritual character of our future purification which needs to be emphasised; and the enforcement of this will tend to remove that prejudice which Roman perversions have so largely created, and give us back an important element of Catholic truth concerning the state of the soul after death. It was a Lutheran divine of the greatest eminence who defied the narrow-mindedness of his sect and boldly taught that "in a purely spiritual sense there must be a Purgatory determined for the cleansing of the soul in the Intermediate State."<sup>1</sup>

Purification  
develops  
a perfect  
character  
of holiness.

Then, as coincident with this purification and removal of the alloy of sin, there is a gradual development of the character of perfect holiness till the qualification for the Beatific Vision is attained, and simultaneously with this those habits will be formed, and that appreciation of all that is lovely and noble and true be infused into the soul, which will make heaven hereafter a scene of unmingled happiness. It is distinctly revealed concerning the souls "under the altar" that "white robes were

<sup>1</sup> "Die Wahrheit dass der Mittelzustand in rein geistigen Sinne ein Purgatorium sein muss, bestimmt zur Läuterung der Seele."  
MARTENSEN, *ibid.*

giben unto every one of them" <sup>1</sup> while they were waiting, and this cannot but symbolise the imparting of greater holiness than they possessed before.

It is a recognised law that we grow like those we love; the more therefore we learn to love Christ, the closer the resemblance will become between us, and it is inevitable that we shall love Him when we shall see Him in His real character, not as it too often appears in this life, marred and distorted by sinful misrepresentations and perverted fancies.

The analogy of all God's works, exhibiting in every part of creation the principle of gradual growth and development, points to such a result. One of the

earliest of the Fathers expressed his belief that it is the ordinance of God that those who are saved should in the future state advance step by step to their perfect beatitude.<sup>2</sup> And herein he did but echo the teaching of the Holy Ghost, Who inspired S. Paul to cheer both his Corinthian and Philippian converts<sup>3</sup> with the assurance that He Who had begun a good work in their hearts would carry it on stage by stage till it arrived at perfect maturity, and they

The testimony of Irenæus.

Of S. Paul.

<sup>1</sup> REV. vi. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Hanc esse ordinationem et dispositionem eorum qui salvantur, dicunt presbyteri Apostolorum discipuli et per hujusmodi gradus proficere et per spiritum quidem ad Filium, per Filium autem ascendere ad Patrem.—*Iren. adv. Hær.* v. xxxvi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 COR. i. 7, 8; PHIL. i. 6.

should be found blameless and without reproach, not in the hour of death, but at the appearance of the Lord Jesus at the end of the world.

It is thus that the souls of the righteous will go "from strength to strength," till on the day of the Resurrection "every one of them in Zion appeareth before God," wholly transformed into the image of Him, under Whose Throne they will abide for evermore.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### The Doctrine of Purgatory in the Latin Church.

A LARGE branch of the Western Church holds that the disembodied soul passes at death into Purgatory, not only for its purification and cleansing from sinful stains, but also for the expiation of venial sins. The nature of the purifying process is less clearly defined than we should have expected.<sup>1</sup> All that Rome has laid down by formal Conciliar decrees is that "there is a Purgatory, and the souls detained there are helped by prayer, and chiefly by the acceptable sacrifice of the Altar";<sup>2</sup> but the practical teaching of the Church upon the subject is much more explicit. For instance, the Council of Trent, which framed the above decrees,

The Roman view of the soul's purification.

<sup>1</sup> Duo tantum ab Ecclesia de Purgatorio definita sunt, ejusdem scilicet existentia, et suffragiorum utilitas erga defunctorum animas. Omnia deinde quæ ad locum, tempus, pœnarum naturam et acerbiteriam spectant, dogma non attingunt.—Perrone, *Prælect. Theol. de Deo*, Pars iii. vi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Sess. vi. Can. 30. Cum Catholica Ecclesia . . . docuerit Purgatorium esse; animasque ibi detentas, fidelium suffragiis, potissimum vero acceptabili altaris sacrificio juvari.—*Conc. Trident.* Sess. xxv. *Decretum de Purgatorio*.

also drew up a Catechism for the instruction of the young, in which the popular belief finds full expression: "there is a Purgatorial *fire* where the souls of the righteous being tormented for a definite time are purified, that an entrance may be given them into their eternal home, where nothing that is defiled entereth in."<sup>1</sup> Bellarmine again, in his treatise on this subject, which is generally accepted as authoritative by members of the Roman Church, asserts that "the pains of Purgatory are very severe, surpassing any endured in this life."<sup>2</sup> The two beliefs involved in the above quotations, viz., that the ordeal is a fiery one, and the punishment expiatory, are supposed to rest upon the declarations of Scripture, which declares that "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is";<sup>3</sup> and that "thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing";<sup>4</sup> but both passages admit of other interpretations.

<sup>1</sup> Præterea est purgatorius ignis, quo piorum animæ ad definitum tempus cruciatæ expiantur, ut eis in æternam patriam ingressus patere possit, in quam nihil coinquinatum ingreditur.—*Cat. Trident.* pars i. Artic. v. § v.

<sup>2</sup> Pœnas esse atrocissimas, et cum illis nullas pœnas hujus vitæ comparandas. *De Purgatorio*, ii. 14. In her Conciliar Decrees Rome has only asserted that souls are *detentæ* in Purgatory: in the Tridentine Catechism, however, she teaches that they are *cruciatæ*, and this accords with what is popularly taught and believed.

<sup>3</sup> 1 COR. iii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> S. MATT. v. 26.



Two fundamental errors seem to lie at the root of the Purgatorial system as held by Rome; first, it abridges the Intermediate State, which Scripture extends from death to the judgment, for the vast majority of souls; and secondly, it abolishes it altogether for those who have died in exceptional holiness. It asserts that the souls of the faithful, as soon as they have paid their allotted penalty in Purgatory, and the souls of the saints and martyrs immediately upon death, pass into the Presence of God without awaiting in either case the day of judgment.<sup>1</sup>

Two important errors inherent in the Roman view.

Now, before setting forth what we believe to be the true Catholic and primitive doctrine of purification after death, it behoves us to investigate the claims to antiquity which Rome makes for her peculiar tenets.

There is abundant Patristic evidence in support of a Purgatorial fire, but it seems to have been for the most part misunderstood, at least it may be shown with greater truth to apply not to an inter-medial purgation, but to a final one at the day of judgment.

The Patristic view of a Purgatorial fire.

<sup>1</sup> This was brought out very fully in the discussions at the Council of Florence, A.D. 1434, especially in the speech of Card. Julian Cesarini.

The first real authority for the Roman view is Gregory the Great,<sup>1</sup> at the close of the sixth century. It is true that S. Augustine is commonly credited with similar opinions, but the evidence is drawn for the most part from spurious and suspected treatises. We shall find from the following and other<sup>2</sup> passages, taken out of his undisputed works, that his mind was never clearly made up. On the one hand he indorses the teaching of his predecessors by what he says of "the fire of judgment" which was destined to try every man's work : "so at the setting of the sun, that is at the end, the day of judgment is signified by that fire, dividing the carnal, which are to be saved by fire, and those who are to be damned in the fire."<sup>3</sup> Again, he speaks of some who "suffer temporary punishments in this life only, and others who suffer them after death," but shows that in the latter case he is referring to "the last and severest judgment" at the final conflagration ; and he cuts himself off completely from all sympathy with the Roman view when he says that some, who have suffered temporary punishments after death, should come into everlasting punishment after

The Purgatorial fire of the day of judgment.

<sup>1</sup> *Dialog.* iv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *De Civ. Dei*, xxi. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Significat jam in fine sæculi per ignem judicandos esse carnales. . . . Significatur isto igne dies judicii dirimens carnales per ignem salvandos. — *De Civ. Dei*, xvi. 24.

judgment.<sup>1</sup> "He destroys," it has been quaintly said,<sup>2</sup> "the salt of the Roman fire, who imagines that all that go to Purgatory shall be saved."

But if these quotations seem to indicate the existence of views antagonistic to the Roman conception of Purgatory, there are others which appear to discount their value.

Once certainly he speaks with a degree of confidence which seems to justify the Roman appeal to his authority.<sup>3</sup> It is in reference to certain men who had lived "an indifferent pious life," of whom he said, "it was certain that being purged before the judgment day by temporal pains which their spirits suffered, when they had received their bodies they should not be delivered to the punishment of eternal fire."<sup>4</sup>

The uncertainty of S. Augustine's opinions.

On the whole, however, it is safer to refuse to accept his evidence either in favour of the Roman view or against it, for little weight can be attached to the opinions of one who could use such expressions as the following in dealing with the sub-

<sup>1</sup> Non autem omnes veniunt in sempiternas pœnas, quæ post illud judicium sunt futuræ, qui post mortem sustinent temporales. —*Id.* xxi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> JER. TAYLOR, *Of Purgatory*, ii, 2, § 1. Vol. vi. 559.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. by Bellarmine, Diaphante, Perron, and others.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Taylor discusses the question of S. Augustine's vacillation on this subject very fully on *Purgatory*, lib. ii. § ii.

ject : "it is not incredible"; "perhaps it is true;" "whether it be so or no, is a fair subject of inquiry ; possibly it may be found true, and possibly it may never be." <sup>1</sup>

The origin  
and de-  
velopment  
of the  
Roman  
Purgatory.

It was not really till a century and a half after S. Augustine that the doctrine of Purgatory as taught by Rome, really took anything like formal and definite shape, and gained possession of the mind of the Church. It was Gregory the Great who first laid it down as a dogmatic truth, that "for certain lighter faults there is a purgatorial fire before the judgment." <sup>2</sup>

There was little attempt to systematise the doctrine till the middle ages, when the Schoolmen speculated largely on the condition of souls in the Intermediate State. They divided them roughly into five classes, and placed them in appropriate localities. In the highest place, which they designated Paradise, were the souls of Martyrs and Saints, who died in no need of purification. Together with these were the Patriarchs and holy

<sup>1</sup> Tale aliquid etiam posthanc vitam fieri incredibile non est, et utrum ita sit, quæri potest et aut inveniri aut latere, nonnullos fideles per ignem quendam purgatorium . . . salvati.—*Enchirid. ad Laurent.* lxix.

<sup>2</sup> *Dial. εἰ μετὰ θάνατον καθαρτικὸν πῦρ ὑπάρχει*, lib. iv. 39 ; also in *Psal.* iii. *Pœniten. in princip.*

men of the Old Dispensation, who had been made eligible for the benefits of the incarnation and atonement by Christ's descent into Hades. Those that were destined to eternal perdition passed the intervening time before the final judgment in *Infernum*, which was in every respect a foretaste of hell. The remaining classes, during the waiting period, were assigned to *limbus patrum*, *limbus infantium*, and Purgatory. *Limbus*<sup>1</sup> was, as Dante described it, "the outer zone of hell." The first was the abode of those who had lived and died under the Old Dispensation before Christ came, but received no accession of happiness through the "descent into hell." The second was the abode of infants who died unbaptized. The third was the state of the faithful whose failings and imperfections required to be corrected and purified by pain, to fit them for admission into the kingdom of heaven.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Aquinas taught that the pains of Purgatory are far in excess of any that are suffered in this life, and that they are not only endued with a cleansing power for the removal of sinful stains, but also avail to make satisfaction for guilt. Notwith-

<sup>1</sup> In Italian it signifies *a border*. Limbo is used for any place of restraint.

<sup>2</sup> Dante allows the *virtuous* heathen a place in *limbus*; e.g. he places Socrates there.

The decision of the Council of Florence.

standing, however, the influence of the schoolmen, the doctrine of Purgatory was not authoritatively formulated till the Council of Florence, A.D. 1439, when the following definition was drawn up and signed: "If men have died truly penitent and in the love of God, but before they have made satisfaction for sins of omission and commission by worthy fruits of repentance, their souls are purified after death by the pains of Purgatory, and to the relief of those pains avail the prayers of the faithful, the sacrifices of masses, supplications, alms, and other offices of piety; the souls of those who die after baptism and without actual sin, and those which after contracting the stain of sin have been cleansed either in their bodies or after they have left them, are then received into heaven and have the vision of the Precious God, one more perfectly than another according to the diversity of their merits; while the souls of others who die in mortal sin or even in original sin only (*i.e.* the unbaptized) descend into hell, to be punished with unequal punishment."<sup>1</sup>

It was hoped that this decision would be accepted by the universal Church, but though it was signed

<sup>1</sup> RICHARD. *Anal. Concil.* iv. p. 671, quoted by Dean Plumptre in *The Spirits in Prison*, p. 300.

by the Eastern Bishops, eighteen<sup>1</sup> in number, who were present, their action was repudiated on their return to Constantinople by those whom they had been commissioned to represent. This reversal of their judgment has been generally<sup>2</sup> supposed to have referred to the entire doctrine there defined; and the Greek and Latin Churches are often said to be wholly at variance touching the Intermediate State; but such is by no means the case. The Orthodox Eastern Churches teach that though for the most part the souls of the faithful are at rest and in peace, yet that some among those who are "hardly saved" undergo punishment before they are fully pardoned and purified from sin; and they agree with the Westerns in the belief that such souls are helped by the prayers of the living and the oblations of the Altar.<sup>3</sup>

Wherein  
the Greek  
and Latin  
Churches  
agree.

On one point, however, these two branches of the Church are and have always been at direct issue, viz., the theory of Indulgences. The Greek Church main-

<sup>1</sup> Sixty-two Latin Bishops signed it.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. HAROLD BROWNE, *Artt.* pp. 501, 502.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. GEORGE WILLIAMS, *The Orthodox and Nonjurors*, 47, 48. MACARIUS, *Theologie Dogm.* ii. 726. The Greeks shrink from using the word *Purgatory*, but the Confession of Dositheus and the Orthodox Catechism both teach what the Latins do concerning it. Cf. KIMMEL's *Monumenta Fidei Eccl. Orient.* ii. 463. SCHAFF's *Creeeds of Christendom*, ii. 342-8, 432, 433.

Wherein  
they are at  
variance.

tains that they may be granted for the abridgment of penalties in this life, but under no circumstances admits their efficacy after death. The Roman Church extends their operation to the Intermediate State, and says that they may be granted for the soul which is undergoing purification, and that God is bound to accept the payment and release the soul.<sup>1</sup>

Indul-  
gences  
granted for  
the dead.

The power of relaxing Canonical penalties belongs by right to the Church in the exercise of spiritual discipline :<sup>2</sup> but Rome claimed an extension of the power, which is wholly unauthorised. It was first<sup>3</sup> so used, at least on any considerable scale, during the Crusades, when the Church held out promises of indulgence to those who were ready to take up the cross and march against the Saracens; and these were declared efficacious as well for the dead as the living. Two bulls issued in A.D. 1118 and 1122 ran as follows: "Since ye have determined to expose both yourselves and what belongs to you to the greatest perils, if any one of you, having accepted penance for your sins, die in the expedi-

<sup>1</sup> AMORT, *Hist. of Indulgences*, Pt. ii. s. v., § 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Nic. Concil. Can. xii. Ancyra, Can. v. Chalcedon, Can. xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Indulgences are commonly said to have been first granted for the dead by Pope John VIII. in A.D. 878, but it has been doubted whether they were indulgences in the strict sense of the word.



tion, by the merits of the saints and the prayers of the whole Catholic Church we absolve him from the chain of his sins";<sup>1</sup> and again, "To those who go to Jerusalem for the defence of the Christians, and to aid in crushing the tyranny of the infidels, we grant the remission of all their sins."<sup>2</sup>

It opened the way for mercenary traffic in connexion with man's highest spiritual interests; and it is well known how rapidly the abuses developed till they reached such a height in the hands of Tetzels, that the indignation of Luther was roused, and in the face of his denunciations Rome admitted her error and prohibited the sale of indulgences for money. The Council of Trent, while upholding the right of the Church to dispense through her ministry out of the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints for the mitigation of Purgatorial pains, and even anathematising all who should deny the said right, forbade that the treasures of the Church should be made use of for purposes of gain.<sup>3</sup>

Luther's  
protest.

Such in its main issues is that which is condemned in the twenty-second Article as "the Romish doctrine

What kind  
of Purga-  
tory is con-  
demned by  
Article  
XXII.

<sup>1</sup> Baronius, A. 1118, xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Issued by Calixtus II. in Concil. Lat. A.D. 1122, Can. xi.

<sup>3</sup> *Pravos quaestus omnes pro his consequendis, unde plurima in Christiano populo abusum causa fluxit, omnino abolendos esse.* Sess. xxv.

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concerning Purgatory, pardons," etc. The limitation is very significant; for, as we have shown in the previous chapter, there is a purgatorial doctrine, which has come down from Catholic and primitive antiquity, and may therefore be held with perfect loyalty to fundamental truth.

## CHAPTER IX.

### The Soul in Peace and Security.

THE belief that the souls of the faithful enter at death on a condition of peace and blissful security laid complete hold of the early Church. In the Book of Wisdom it had been declared that they "are in the hand of God and there shall no torment touch them."<sup>1</sup> The inspired author of the Apocalypse had heard a voice from heaven declaring them "blessed" "which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours."<sup>2</sup> Our Blessed Lord Himself too, when He would sum up in one word the condition of Lazarus, after all the privations and trials of life were over, spoke of him in Abraham's bosom as "comforted."<sup>3</sup> He knew the sense of deep inward peace that he was experiencing as he realised that his hard lot had been suddenly changed into entire freedom from care and anxiety.

When the fact is once grasped that the spirit in Paradise is drawn into full communion with Christ,

<sup>1</sup> iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> REV. xiv. 13.

<sup>3</sup> S. LUKE xvi. 25.

the Head of the Church, that it is "brought back from the periphery of life to the centre," away, that is, from all that disheartening environment which on earth mars so sadly all fellowship with Him Who desires to be our supreme good, it is quite impossible to conceive of its condition being otherwise than perfectly peaceful and happy.

In speaking of the relationship of the saints to Christ on earth, even when it is limited by finite restriction, S. Peter was able to write: "whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory";<sup>1</sup> what then must be the blessedness of those who are set free from such limitations, and whose faith is merged in sight!

The chief causes of the soul's peace and union with Christ.

This then is the primary cause of that peace which reigns in Paradise, and the sense of security it necessarily inspires breathes forth in the intense longing of the Apostle<sup>2</sup> to be "at home with the Lord," in his "desire to depart" and to be "with Christ," which he pronounced to be "far better" than the life in the flesh. It was not the confession of a man who was disappointed and out of heart because his lot was a hard one; it is true he was "in bonds" for Christ's sake and the Gospel's; but

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. PET. i. 8.

<sup>2</sup> PHIL. i. 23.

we have only to think of the tremendous privileges which he had enjoyed, and which must have far outweighed his passing discomforts, to be satisfied that he would have pronounced the same verdict even in regard to life at its best. He had received a direct revelation from heaven, and had been set apart as a "chosen vessel" to bear Christ's Name to the heathen; he had been vouchsafed a glimpse of the future glories of the redeemed, and yet besides all this, he was entitled to act as Christ's delegate, giving health to the sick, sight to the blind, and even restoring the dead to life. He, if any one, had reason to be satisfied with what he had experienced; but he knew that there was something infinitely better in store for him even than all this. It was all gathered up in the single conviction of being "ever with the Lord," which was to him the consummation of all possible bliss. Union with Christ } was the inspiring motive of his life: he counted all things but loss, yea, he counted them as dung that he might "win Christ."<sup>1</sup> His life was hid with Christ in God; the life that he lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved him and gave Himself for him.<sup>2</sup> It all inspired him with an intense feeling of the surpassing satisfaction

<sup>1</sup> PHIL. iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> GAL. ii. 20.

he would experience in the perfected realisation of undisturbed communion, and it drew forth his decision that to depart and to be with Christ is "far better," even than the very best that could be granted to him in this world.

The knowledge that probation is over.

Another cause of "the peace which passeth all understanding" beyond the grave is the knowledge that the time of trial and probation is safely over: that there can be no more temptation and no more failure: the soul has been separated from the companionship of evil men, and all the attractions of a sinful world have lost their cunning. The will is no longer divided, and the miserable confession can never more be made: "what I would that do I not, but what I hate that do I."<sup>1</sup> Henceforward there is no possibility of being found guilty of willing, even by the slightest motion of the will, anything that contradicts the all-holy will of God.

"Death," as S. Ambrose said, "has put away all those principles within us which war against each other, because it is a kind of harbour for those who, after tossing on the wide sea of this life, seek for an anchorage of secure peace."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ROM. vii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Quia compugnantia dividit, ne se invicem impugnent: et quia portus quidam est eorum qui magno vitæ istius jactati salo fidæ quietis stationem requirunt.—*De Bono Mortis*, i. iv.

Again, the peace of Paradise is that which breaks upon a soul that realises that its sin is forgiven : that all suspense is over, and the pardon sealed.

Conscious-  
ness of  
pardon.

We know what it is to some condemned prisoner to hear that a free pardon has been granted and the order of release actually signed. The clouds of anxiety are swept away and nothing remains but a feeling of complete peace and joy. It is only the faintest image of that over-mastering sense of security which takes possession of a soul that is carried by angels to the land where none but the pardoned find an entrance, where the verdict of acquittal can never be reversed.

Then lastly, this peace is deepened by the never-absent thought of a growing nearness to the climax of all spiritual joy, the Beatific Vision. There must be an unspeakable satisfaction in witnessing a gradual and ever-increasing conformity to the Divine Image, as those sinful stains which have left their mark even on the purest souls are one by one effaced.

The near-  
ness of the  
Beatific  
Vision.

It was the knowledge of this which prompted pseudo-Dionysius to speak of the souls of the righteous "beholding their way to immortality more clearly as being near to it, and as praising the gifts of the Godhead and exulting with Divine joy, from having no fears that they should turn aside to evil,

but being assured that they will safely and for ever enjoy the good things laid up for them.”<sup>1</sup>

In a similar strain S. Cyprian wrote: “Simeon rejoicing in the nearness of death said, ‘Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace’; proving and attesting that then have the servants of God peace, then are they free, then have quiet rest, when, withdrawn from the storms of the world, we gain the haven of our everlasting rest and security.”<sup>2</sup>

A sense of peace not inconsistent with the idea of purification.

But how, it may be asked, is this sense of peace and perfect bliss consistent with that process of purification which we spoke of as continuing after death? The very term purification seems to involve pain; it is a consequence of penitence, and penitence without pain seems hardly worthy of the name. It is true, nevertheless, that with a certain conviction that our sins have been forgiven we can go to God and make a heartfelt acknowledgment of past ingratitude, and express the deepest sorrow for what we have done amiss, without even losing for a moment that sense of fellowship with God which makes our peace so intensely real.

The greatest happiness not always uninterrupted.

Again, it is not necessary even for what may be called perfect happiness, that our lives should be lived in undisturbed unbroken peace. Yea, it is a

<sup>1</sup> *Eccl. Hier.* i. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *De Mortalitate*, n. 2.



recognised fact that at least here on earth some interruption upon the smooth and even course of a happy life often tends to intensify its joy. There are many cases where the interruptions that have broken the calm tenor of such a life have been caused, as indeed they generally are, by the presence of sin and sinful desires warring against the soul, and yet the knowledge of this does not make us hesitate to speak of those who so live as being in joy and felicity; much more then may we attribute this blessed condition to the souls of the faithful departed, when we know that if their sky is ever overcast it is only by the memory of sins that have been forgiven. It will make the greatest conceivable difference in the character of our pain and sorrow for sin when we shall have within us a sense of absolute security against all possibility of its ever being repeated. In Paradise the very sight of the Holy Saviour must awaken feelings of deep contrition and hatefulness of sin, but it will be no rankling sore. This combination of joy and pain of which we are speaking was expressed with singular beauty in the poet's dream :—

“It is the face of the Incarnate God  
Shall smite thee with that keen and subtle pain;  
And yet the memory which it leaves will be  
A sovereign febrifuge to heal the wound;

. . . . .

When, then (if such thy lot), thou see'st thy Judge,  
The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart  
All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts.  
Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him,  
And feel as though thou couldst but pity Him,  
That one so sweet should e'er have placed Himself  
At disadvantage such, as to be used  
So vilely by a being so vile as thee.  
There is a piercing in His pensive eyes  
Will pierce thee to the quick, and trouble thee.  
And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself; for, though  
Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinned,  
As never didst thou feel; and wilt desire  
To slink away, and hide thee from His sight;  
And yet wilt have a longing, aye to dwell  
Within the beauty of His countenance.  
And these two pains, so counter and so keen,—  
The longing for Him, when thou see'st Him not;  
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him,—  
Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.”<sup>1</sup>

This combination, as it were, of the two elements of pain and pleasure in the souls of the faithful is a mystery that we cannot wholly grasp, but we feel a certain conviction that there will be such a vast preponderance of joy and felicity that everything else will sink into insignificance. It was boldly said by a most saintly writer, who realised intensely the blessedness of being delivered from the burden of the flesh: “I do not believe it would be possible to find any joy comparable to that of a soul in

The  
triumph of  
peace over  
disquiet-  
ude.

<sup>1</sup> NEWMAN'S *Dream of Gerontius*, pp. 42, 43, 44.

purgatory, except the joy of the blessed in Paradise—a joy which goes on increasing day by day as God more and more flows in upon the soul, which He does abundantly, in proportion as every hindrance to His entrance is consumed away.”<sup>1</sup> She has given the key to the complete triumph of peace over unrest in the faithful soul in the closing sentence; the pains of purification diminish in the realisation of a progressive holiness and increasing conformity to the Divine Image, till at last, when the cleansing process is complete, they cease altogether and are lost in joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It was the conviction that the pains of purification would be thus gradually extinguished through an ever-advancing growth of holiness which led the early Fathers of the Church to speak even of the fiery baptism of the day of judgment as powerless to hurt the saints who had been perfected in the Intermediate State.

Origen spoke of some who “shall remain in the fire, and the fire shall be as dead to them, even as it was to the Hebrew children who were exposed to the flame of the burning furnace.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Catherine of Genoa. Cf. *Treatise on Purgatory*, ed. by Card. Manning, c. 2, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> In PSALM xxxvi. n. 26, i. 790, Bened.

Lactantius is even more explicit : "They whom full righteousness and perfect virtue hath ripened shall not be sensible of that fire, for they have somewhat of God within themselves, which beateth back and rejects the force of the flame. Such is the power of innocence that the fire flies before it, incapable of doing it harm." <sup>1</sup>

S. Gregory Nazianzen described the final purification as "perchance the cleansing of a friendly fire." <sup>2</sup>

Paulinus of Nola echoes the same sentiment : "If we dwell in the city of God by those works, whereby we become meet to be fellow-citizens with the saints, our work shall not be burned ; and that sagacious fire, when we pass through its ordeal, will surround us with no severe heat of punishment ; but as if we were commended to its care, it will play around us with a kind caress, so that we may say, 'We have passed through fire and water, and Thou hast brought us to a place of refreshment.' " <sup>3</sup>

We can have no doubt then that the early Christians were right when they laid their faithful

<sup>1</sup> Quos autem plena justitia et maturitas virtutis incoxerit ignem illum non sentient. Habent enim aliquid in se Dei quod vim flammæ repellat ac respuat. Tanta est vis innocentiae ut ab ea ignis ille refugiat innoxius.—*Div. Instit.* vii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *De seipso*, v. 490. FORBES, *Artt.* 332.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. xxxviii. *ad LEVER*, n. 1-3. i. 176, Paris.

dead in the catacombs and wrote upon their graves the simple but expressive words, *In pace*.<sup>1</sup> Those too who framed the earliest forms of public worship had an assured conviction of the happy and peaceful condition of those who died in the Lord, for out of a vast number of primitive Liturgies that were used through the length and breadth of the Catholic Church, there are only two which suggest the reverse.

The witness  
of the Cata-  
combs.

The fact is our first fathers in the Faith had an intense belief in the truth which Wisdom had made known, that "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them,"<sup>2</sup> and they were determined that nothing should rob them of the deep and abiding comfort which that conviction inspired.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *After Death*: The Testimony of the Catacombs, pp. 81, 87.

<sup>2</sup> WISD. iii. 1.

## CHAPTER X.

### The Special Ministries of the Souls of the Faithful.

IF we are right in our conclusions that there can be no suspension of consciousness, no intellectual or spiritual stagnation, in the Intermediate State, but that the souls of the righteous are ever reaching forward "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," it seems only natural for us to consider under what influences such progress may be made. The objective agencies "for the perfecting of the saints, . . . for the edifying of the Body of Christ"<sup>1</sup> will come before us when we dwell upon the constitution and work of the Invisible Church;<sup>2</sup> now we would only suggest that the soul may find within itself hereafter, through the continuity of its spiritual ministries, not merely a most restful and blessed satisfaction but at the same time an efficient means for its own advancement.

<sup>1</sup> EPH. iv. 12, 13

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *infra*, ch. xvi.

As in this life, experience shows that ministering to those who are ignorant or imperfectly instructed in the knowledge of God, is a great means of strengthening a man's religious character; as the very desire to hold up for imitation the highest example of a Christ-like life is a powerful factor in developing the faculties that create it, so, it may be, hereafter the act of ministering spiritual service to other souls within the fold of the Invisible Church will prove to be an important means for one's own advancement. ?

The possibility of such opportunities of usefulness after death helps us to understand the deep mystery of Divine Providence, when God cuts short the earthly career of one whose life, as man judges, is of priceless value to the Church or the home. The influence, the preaching, the ministrations are not stopped, they are only transferred to another sphere, to be continued with intensified energy under spiritual conditions, though no material ear may hear the voice, no mortal hand shall feel the touch; they are lost to the Church on earth, they are gained by the Church in the Intermediate State. ?

It is no mere idle speculation of private judgment, at least if the archetype of humanity, the ideal and pattern Man, may be regarded as a model Christ our example in death as in life.

for us to follow in death as well as in life. S. Peter tells us that with quickened powers Christ went and preached to certain spirits in Hades;<sup>1</sup> again, he adds that He preached the gospel to dead men in general, for the absence of the definite article in the original involves this conclusion.<sup>2</sup> It points to a continuity after death of the work which had been carried on in life. As in the flesh Christ gave Himself up to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, so in His spirit, when it passed to the land of disembodied souls, He carried on the work which God had given Him to do. And if, as no one doubts, in His life upon earth He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps,<sup>3</sup> it is very difficult to believe that He is not also the type of our life in the spirit in the unseen world. It deepens immeasurably the importance of our earthly training and pursuits to feel that nothing in this life that we do is temporal only, but all has its bearing on the eternity that is to follow.

There is evidence that that act of our Blessed Lord in preaching "to the spirits in prison" was so interpreted in the primitive Church, which is

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. PET. iii. 18, 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* iv. 6. *καὶ νεκροῖς εὐηγγελισθη* . .

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* ii. 21.



generally to be trusted as the best exponent of the teaching of Scripture. It was one of the Apostolic Fathers, whose book was among the most popular in the early Christian Church; and was publicly read as being inspired, who distinctly asserted that "the apostles and teachers who preached the Name of the Son of God, preached it to those who had fallen asleep . . . by these they were quickened and made to know the Name of the Son of God."<sup>1</sup> He was followed by another who repeated the same declaration again and again, and held that "all who believed should be saved, though they were of the Gentiles, on making their profession there,"<sup>2</sup> that is, in the Intermediate State; and once he asserted that "the Apostles following the example of their Lord preached the Gospel to those in Hades."<sup>3</sup> The belief of these early Fathers lends distinct countenance to the thought that we shall exercise hereafter in the world of spirits under spiritual conditions those special ministries and peculiar graces which marked our earthly life and work.

The preaching of the Apostles in Hades.

Continuity of spiritual work after death.

<sup>1</sup> Hermas, *Pastor*, iii. xvi. The authorship of the treatise has been disputed, but Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome all assigned it to the Hermas named in Ep. to Romans, xvi. 14. It was held to be inspired by Clem. Alex., Irenæus, and Origen.

<sup>2</sup> CLEM. ALEX. *Str.* vi. vi.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

There is a very clear foreshadowing of it in the anticipations of the heathen philosopher. In that sublime defence in which Socrates argues with his judges upon the uncertainty of what death may bring, after describing the delight it will be to him to consort with kindred spirits, and to dwell on the injustice of his sentence with men who have experienced a similar condemnation, he suddenly breaks out into a rapture of inconceivable joy at the thought that he would be able to continue in the other world the work of his life, to question and examine the souls he should meet, and find out what their characters really were.<sup>1</sup>

If this seems to contradict the declaration of the voice from heaven that the happiness of the departed soul lies in the "rest" that is prepared for it: "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them";<sup>2</sup> our answer is that it is far from certain that we have rightly interpreted what the angel said. There is no doubt that the latter part of the message might as fitly be translated: "their works follow with them." It is so rendered in the Revised Version.

Not inconsistent with rest in Paradise.

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Apolog. Socr.* c. 32; cf. *inf.* ch. xi.

<sup>2</sup> REV. xiv.

In the one case the words may imply either that the fruit of earthly labour is often not gathered till those who have toiled to produce it have passed from the scene of their labours; or that the recollection of past labours, the consciousness of what has been done for God brings with it in after time an abiding sense of peace and restful contentment; and both these meanings correspond to our common experience. In the other case the words involve an interpretation which harmonises with quite another line of thought, viz., that which has been suggested by this chapter.

The souls of the righteous rest within the veil, but it is no idle life, for it is a wholly inadequate view of rest to identify it with inactivity. They work, but unlike all earthly labour, the work they do in Paradise is restful and satisfying. Here it matters not how willing the spirit of a man may be, his flesh is always weak, and weakness brings with it a sense of weariness, and at least some measure of disappointment; but the whole effect upon us is changed when that consciousness of failure, which mars all earthly endeavour, is taken away, and we can feel sure that whatever we do will bear its fruit.

Pascal felt the need of work to be so absolutely

necessary for perfect happiness, that he did not hesitate to assert that the want of occupation for our moral energies in the future world would turn heaven into hell.

It redeems  
the future  
life from  
the charge  
of being  
wholly  
selfish.

Now there is one great reason why we should foster the idea of work in the Intermediate State ; it helps to redeem the future life from the character of selfishness which is usually attached to it in the pictures which men draw. Indeed, so general has the aspect of it come to be, that it has been said that however diverse the roads which men may take in their investigations into the possibilities of the future state, they come invariably in the end to the same point : " it is a state of gratified and glorified selfishness." It is, however, an entirely erroneous estimate of those developed powers which we are led to expect hereafter to suppose that the mere possession of them will be the source of happiness. Take a single illustration—mental and intellectual knowledge. Which is it that gives to the man of learning and wisdom his highest sense of satisfaction ? is it the conviction that he has within himself for his own individual enjoyment the greatest of all earthly possessions ? or is it the thought that he is possessed of something which will enable him to

impart to others less favoured than himself that which will brighten and illuminate their lives? It is surely the latter; and not only here upon earth, for it is a maxim that reaches beyond the limits of time and space: "it is more blessed to give than to receive."<sup>1</sup> It has been said with no little beauty of thought and expression, that students of Divine truth, whose personal training in this world has been spent in pursuing the knowledge of God's words and ways, may well be imagined hereafter as "bending themselves to the task of tutoring the less gifted or less enlightened, perhaps utterly heathen, souls in Divine science; and finding eternally in this a deeper blessedness than the loftiest attainments of man or seraph could ever yield."<sup>2</sup> The more we shall be united with Christ, the more we shall catch of His spirit, and by sharing His unselfish thought and care for others, grow in conformity to the likeness of Him Who expressed the character of His Divine life in the words: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ACTS xx. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Contemporary Review*, No. xvii. p. 140. The idea of the unselfishness of the future life is well worked out in the article.

<sup>3</sup> S. JOHN v. 17.

“ We know not ; but if life be there  
The outcome and the crown of this ;  
What else can make their perfect bliss  
Than in their Master’s work to share ?

Resting, but not in slumbrous ease,  
Working, but not in wild unrest,  
Still ever blessing, ever blest,  
They see us as the Father sees.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BUTLER, *Things Old and New*, p. 143.

## CHAPTER XI.

### Mutual Recognition and Renewed Companionship.

THE idea of association forms a constituent element in our expectation of future happiness. That which separates and disintegrates society is sin; but when once the souls of men have passed beyond the sphere of its influence, they will find themselves through union with the Lord drawn into closer communion with all the members of His Body, their common love for the Head cementing the ties which bind them together.

“Many,” it is said, “shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>1</sup> It would be difficult to represent the existence of the social principle in the future world under a more striking emblem; and surely if Christ teaches by these words that even strangers from most distant parts will meet hereafter in blest companionship,

The social  
principle  
to be  
preserved.

<sup>1</sup> S. MATT. viii. 11.

the promise contains a still stronger assurance that friendships which have begun on earth will be perpetuated after death. It is subject, however, to one proviso, for they can only survive the shock of death, if they are based upon the eternal principles of truth and holiness. Hence the intense reality of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

Now what evidence can we produce to support the conviction that personal friendships are imperishable—that our love to man no less than our love to God is really and more than by any figure of speech, “stronger than death”? It is forthcoming in abundance and from every quarter; indeed the consentient voice and hopes of humanity answer the inquiry by the strongest affirmation.

A consensus  
of opinion  
on the  
subject.

The belief underlies the religion of the heathen nations; it shows itself in the language of the ancient Jews notwithstanding their feeble grasp of the future life; and it is testified to in the Scriptures of the New Dispensation. Let us examine these sources of information severally in order; and first the heathen testimony.

The evi-  
dence of  
the classical  
poets.

Homer.

The profane writings of classical antiquity almost teem with references to the belief. In one of the oldest poems extant the opinion of the age in which he lived is vividly depicted. Homer represented



the hero of his epic as passing into the invisible world, recognising the shades of the mighty dead, and holding familiar intercourse with departed friends. Ulysses greets with delight the form of his mother, who receives him with a passionate outburst of love and affection.<sup>1</sup> Achilles and Patroclus,<sup>2</sup> the earthly types of inseparable friendship, are still undivided in the underworld.

Then if we pass on a thousand years we find the same belief still in vogue. In the Latin epic of Virgil, hardly less renown the other world is peopled with spirits which remain constant to their earthly friendships. Æneas receives a cordial welcome from his old comrades in the flesh, and there is a scene of touching tenderness, where father and son fall into each other's arms.<sup>3</sup>

Again, if we lay the tragedies of the heathen poets under tribute, we find that they embody with no less force the bright hopes of renewed intercourse in the land of spirits. The ill-fated Antigone is nerved to bear a cruel death by the anticipation of ministering comfort to her parents who had preceded her to the land of departed spirits: "O tomb, O bridal chamber, O subterranean ever-watchful dwelling,

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey* xi. 84, 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* xxiv.

<sup>3</sup> *Æneid* vi. 655, and 931, etc.

whether I am going to my relations . . . the last of whom and by far the worst I go down, but I cherish great hopes that when I go I shall be welcome to my father, and dear to thee my mother, and to thee my sister.”<sup>1</sup>

But if the thought should arise in the mind that this after all is only the fancy of poetry, we can meet the objection by testimony equally strong from the grave and sober reflections of philosophy.

Plato.

When Socrates is pleading before his judges in the face of impending death, he breaks into a rapture of delight in the thought of holding communion with the dead, and though, it is true, he does not name those whom he had known personally in the flesh, he still speaks of them as friends known and read by what they had done or said, “Will it not be unspeakably blessed, when escaped from those who call themselves judges, to appear before those who deserve the title . . . or to converse with

<sup>1</sup> ὦ τύμβος, ὦ νυμφεῖον, ὦ κατασκαφῆς  
οἰκησις αἰείφρουρος, οἷ πορεύομαι  
πρὸς τοὺς ἐμαντῆς . . .  
ὦν λιοισθία ἄγὼ καὶ κάκιστα δὴ μακρῶ  
κάτειμι, . . .  
ἐλθοῦσα μέντοι κάρτ' ἐν ἐλπίσιν τρέφω  
φίλη μὲν ἤξειν πατρὶ, προσφιλῆς δὲ σοι,  
μῆτερ, φίλη δὲ σοι, κασίγνητον κάρα.

SOPH. *Antig.* 891-9.

Orpheus, and Musæus, and Hesiod and Homer; how much would any of you give to purchase this? Believe me, I would choose to die frequently, if this be true; for it would be delightful to hold communion with the ancients who died under an unjust sentence pronounced upon them. What would one give to converse with him who led the great armament to Troy, or with Ulysses, or with a thousand others one could name, with whom to associate would be an inconceivable pleasure!"<sup>1</sup>

Cicero too, as he sits down to write his reveries Cicero. on old age, finds its discomforts relieved by the anticipation of a speedy reunion with lost friends. We can never forget the grand outburst in which he describes what he expects to see when this life is closed. He too like his brother moralist carries his thoughts beyond the friends and relations to whom he had been united by actual ties of flesh and blood, and rejoices in the prospect of looking upon the great and noble whom in imagination he had learnt

<sup>1</sup> τί μείζον ἀγαθὸν τούτου εἶη; εἰ γὰρ τις ἀφικνούμενος εἰς Ἄδου, ἀπαλλαγείς τούτων τῶν φασκόντων δικαστῶν εἶναι, εὐρήσει τοὺς ὡς ἀληθῶς δικαστὰς . . . ἥ αὖ Ὀρφεὶ συγγενέσθαι . . . ἐπὶ πύσῳ ἂν τις δέξαιτ' ἂν ὑμῶν; ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ πολλάκις ἐθέλω τεθνάναι εἰ ταῦτά ἐστιν ἀληθῆ . . . οἷς διαλέγεσθαι ἐκεῖ καὶ ξυνεῖναι καὶ ἐξετάζειν ἀμηχάνον ἂν εἶη εὐδαιμονίας.—PLATO, *Apol. Soc.*, *ad fin.*

to love and whom he expected to recognise hereafter by the marks which they had stamped upon their lives for eternity through the works that they had left behind them.<sup>1</sup>

The suttee  
of India.

Again, if we turn from ancient to modern heathendom, we find the same belief repeated in a greater or less degree. Indeed more than half of the superstition which surrounds their funereal rites is bound up with the idea of reunion after death. To take the most signal illustration ; what was it that made the Hindu widow devote herself in the very prime of life and beauty to a premature death, but a firm conviction that the funeral pyre of her husband would restore to her all that she had lost, perhaps would give her even more, so that in their reunion they might spend together happier days than they had spent on earth ?

This practice of self-destruction for such a purpose is not confined to India, or to modern times : for it is as old as the time of Socrates, and, as he testified, widely adopted. "Are there not," he asks in treating of the immortality of the soul, "numbers, who upon the death of their connexions and children, have chosen of their own accord to enter Hades, induced by the hope of seeing there some of the

<sup>1</sup> *de Senectute*, 23.

objects of their desire, and of associating with them?"<sup>1</sup>

Again, it is the same in the West. Among the natives of Canada far above the wailings for the dead rise the excited cries of a certain hope that they will meet again "beyond the hills," and that old occupations will then be renewed and friendships revived under better and happier conditions. The native of Canada.

It is unnecessary to safeguard the testimony we have adduced from misapplication. It has not been used as an argument for the truth of the doctrine of future recognition, but simply on the ground that, if it shall be found that the fact is established by the evidence of Scripture, it will not have been in vain to have discovered the coincidence. It will be one more illustration of a truth so often noticed—the voice of nature is the voice of God.

We pass now from Pagan testimony to that which is revealed to us in the pages of Scripture.

There is not much variety of evidence in the Old Testament: indeed it would have been very surprising if there had been; but there is sufficient to prove the existence of the belief. The witness of the Old Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Muston, *Recognition in the World to Come*, ch. ii. p. 30. Additional illustrations may be found in the same author, and in KILLEN, *Our Friends in Heaven*, Appendix.

We read the lives of the great heroes of Patriarchal times, and as one after another closes, this is the language in which the chronicler or prophet records the fact: He "died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people; and his sons buried him."<sup>1</sup> Was gathered unto his people—that gathering was something which followed death but preceded burial, and it was an event of no little moment.

Look for its significance to the case of Moses. When his work was done, and he had delivered his last message in which he set forth the Divine mercy and vengeance, God summoned him to His Presence with these words: "Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho, . . . and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people."<sup>2</sup>

If Moses had been laid in the grave of his ancestors, his bones beside their bones, then we should have said at once that the requirements of the language were satisfied by supposing that God directed him simply to be buried in their midst. But the sequel of the history forbids such an inter-

<sup>1</sup> GEN. xxv. 8, 9, 17; xxxv. 29; xlix. 33.

<sup>2</sup> DEUT. xxxii. 49, 50.

pretation: "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord; and He (*i.e.* GOD) buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."<sup>1</sup>

It was no burial, then, which the sacred historian recorded when he spoke of his being "gathered unto his people"; but it was the reunion of the Patriarch's spirit with the spirits of a great ancestry of friends and relations who had gone before him to the land of rest.

There is an episode in David's life which will serve to illustrate the self-same truth. When the child which Bathsheba had borne to him was stricken with sickness and near to die, he was bowed to the earth with grief; and his servants were afraid to think what would happen, if the child should be taken from him. But what was their amazement when they told him that the child was dead! The cloud of grief was swept from his face, and the very sunshine of joy succeeded, as he broke out, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is

<sup>1</sup> DEUT. xxxiv. 5, 6.

dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”<sup>1</sup>

“I shall go to him”—there lay the secret spring of his joy and consolation, there in the bright anticipation of a reunion after death with the object of his love.

We turn lastly to the evidence of the New Testament. Two illustrations will suffice, both from our Lord’s Own lips, but one in parable, the other a direct statement.

Of the New  
Testament.

In the parable of the Unjust Steward, Christ teaches His hearers the right use of riches; “*Make,*” He says, “to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness”; make, that is, friends by means of<sup>2</sup> that wealth which is so often employed for unrighteous purposes, so “that, when ye fail,” He means, when ye die,<sup>3</sup> “they may receive you into everlasting habitations.”

Our Lord here represents the spirits of those who in their life upon earth had been helped and

<sup>1</sup> 2 SAM. xii. 15-23.

<sup>2</sup> S. LUKE xvi. 9. ἐκ τοῦ μαμμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας—ἐκ marks a cause or source, as in 1 COR. ix. 14, “live of the Gospel.” Cf. S. LUKE xii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> There is a *varia lectio*, ἐκλήπη, i.e. when it fails, when riches take their flight; but it marks the same time, viz., death.



befriended by their richer brethren—still in the flesh, as it were, waiting on the threshold of the other world to welcome their arrival when they died.

The promise of our Lord to the robber-outlaw will furnish the second illustration. “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”<sup>1</sup> “Thou be with Me”—it was an assurance of their continued identity and their future companionship in reciprocal intercourse; and we can well believe that it was not so much the expectation of Paradise, but the thought of the blessed company of Him, the power of Whose love he had realised so intensely, and Whose forgiving pardon had rescued him from perdition, which ministered comfort to his soul.

Now, if there is one idea which the subject of perpetuated friendships ought always to suggest, it is that permanence is assured to those alone which are based upon the love of God. It is to be a communion of *Saints*: it is only those whom God has joined together that death will have no power to separate. It is a call to men to make friends on earth in the family of God: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?”<sup>2</sup>

The basis  
of lasting  
friendship.

<sup>1</sup> S. LUKE xxiii. 43.

<sup>2</sup> 2 COR. vi. 14.

It is the pure and holy love : it is the sanctified affections and attachments which will survive this passing world ; and if only the foundation of these has been firmly laid in this life, they will be strengthened and purified in Paradise, and will attain to maturity and never-ending permanence in the glorified state.

## CHAPTER XII.

### Difficulties created by the Belief in Future Recognition.

IN our ignorance of the way in which our faculties will be exercised in a spiritual state, we find it hard to grasp the idea of the future recognition of disembodied souls.

The difficulty, however, of preserving our identity after death would be greatly diminished if we accepted the theory that there are spirit-forms, and that the soul, when it has left the body, still retains some incorporeal shape or figure. It is no novel or unauthorised fancy, for it has come down to us even from the primitive Church, where it seems to have engaged the attention of several of the Fathers.

Tertullian, in his treatise on the Soul, expressed a very definite belief that "it retained the image of the body by which it had been enclosed"; and in support of this opinion he related a story of a Christian friend who frequently fell into a trance, and said that on one occasion she had seen the

The probable existence of spirit-forms.

Patristic evidence.

soul corporeally, not, that is, as a vague shadow or spectre, but in a definite form.<sup>1</sup>

Irenæus went so far as to appeal to Christ's authority for such a view: "The Lord," he says, "has taught, with very great fulness, that souls not only continue to exist, not by passing from body to body, but that they preserve the same form in their separate state as the body had to which they were adapted; and that they remember the deeds which they did in this state of existence."<sup>2</sup>

Somewhat later, Macarius took up the idea, and endeavoured to explain the possibility of souls manifesting themselves to sight by the analogy of angels.<sup>3</sup>

This testimony rested in no small degree upon what is told us in Holy Scripture of the appearance of Samuel to Saul at Endor,<sup>4</sup> and of Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration,<sup>5</sup> as well as on the fact that angels have from time to time been seen

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian has written at length on this subject, and uses very decided expressions in favour of the soul's retaining some corporeity after death. Cf. *de Anima* vii., ix., and *de Resurrectione Carnis*, xvii.

<sup>2</sup> ii. xxxiv. § 1.

<sup>3</sup> ἡ ψυχὴ ἔχει εἰκόνα καὶ μορφήν ὁμοιάζουσαν τῷ ἀγγέλῳ . . . ὥσπερ ὁ ἔξω ἄνθρωπος ἔχει εἰκόνα οὕτω καὶ ὁ ἔσω εἰκόνα ἔχει ὁμοίαν τῷ ἀγγέλῳ καὶ τῷ ἔξω ἀνθρώπῳ μορφήν.—*Hom.* vi. 6.

<sup>4</sup> 1 SAM. xxviii. 14.

<sup>5</sup> S. MATT. xvii. 3; S. LUKE ix. 30, 31.

in definite and recognisable forms, though in all cases they were spirits or spiritual beings.<sup>1</sup> It has been sufficiently strong to convince not a few,<sup>2</sup> that in their separate condition the souls of men are possessed of a discernible shape, and retain "an immaterial outline," or "phenomenal investiture," or some kind of corporeity corresponsive to the form in which they were clothed in their embodied state.

Thus such a sober-minded theologian as the Lutheran Martensen<sup>3</sup> arrived at the conclusion that the soul must have some kind of clothing, "some intermediate kind of corporeity" in the realm of the dead; and that this need not exclude the fundamental spiritual idea of Hades. If, however, such a theory were found to be untenable, it would in no way imperil the possibility of future recognition; it would only throw us back upon the belief that it will be attainable through some subtler organs of perception than those with which we are now familiar. The truth of after-recognition seems indisputable in the light of what is revealed, though the mode of realising it may be quite beyond our reach of comprehension.

Martensen's view

Recognition however independent of the soul's corporeity.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ISA. xiv. 16; EZEK. xxxi; REV. vii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. UMBREIT *on Sin*, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> *Dogm. Theolog.* § 276

Our Lord's  
teaching on  
the subject  
of marriage.

Another difficulty has been often urged from the language of our Blessed Lord in meeting the Sadduceean objection touching the apparent impossibility of perpetuating the marriage union in the future state. They appealed to the Levirate Law of the Jews, and adduced an imaginary case in which, in obedience to its directions, seven brethren in succession had married the same woman ; and they asked with no unnatural curiosity whose wife she would be hereafter ? And Jesus replied to them : “ Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God ? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage ; but are as the angels which are in heaven.” <sup>1</sup>

Now it has been hastily assumed that this answer discountenanced all belief in a future reunion of any kind, by denying the possibility of it in the highest or ideal form. Christ's words, however, must be regarded from the standpoint of his opponents ; He was called upon to argue with men who held only gross and material views of marriage, and had consequently no conception whatever of the close spiritual tie which made the Holy Ghost adopt it as a type of the union between Christ and the

<sup>1</sup> S. MARK xii. 18-25.

Church.<sup>1</sup> On the Sadduceean side it was temporary only; but on the Christian side it was indestructible.

In so far as Marriage was an Ordinance instituted to provide for the continuance of the human race upon earth—simply, that is, as a counterfoil of death—it would have no continuance in the world to come. Just as there is no death among the angels, so it will be with men and women, “neither can they die any more.”<sup>2</sup> “Marriages,” says S. Augustine, “are on account of children: children on account of succession: succession on account of death; where therefore there is no death, neither is there any marriage.”<sup>3</sup> What, then, our Lord says is: such an union as the Sadducees conceived of, tainted by carnal affections and marred by all the envy and jealousy which a fallen human nature would necessarily give rise to in such circumstances as they contemplated, could not possibly be perpetuated hereafter; but all this is of the earth earthy, and it will pass away and leave no enduring trace behind. But there may be, and when marriage was instituted in the times of man’s innocency, it was

<sup>1</sup> EPH. v. 32.

<sup>2</sup> S. LUKE xx. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the Author’s *Footprints of the Son of Man*: Sadduceean Difficulties, ch. lvi.

designed that there should always be a spiritual bond between them that are married, and in so far as this exists the union will be perpetuated after death.

Under present conditions in a fallen and degenerate state there is no eternal principle inherent in marriage by itself. We can only be assured of the indestructibility of any earthly union by the knowledge that it has been based upon that common love of God which nothing can sever.

Difficulty  
touching  
the absence  
of friends  
hereafter.

There is yet another difficulty, and of a very distressing nature; but the above consideration will have helped to remove this also. It has been forcibly put in the following terms: "if the disciples of Christ are to meet with the full recollection of each other in the world to come, does it not follow, that in many instances they must be aware of the absence of some who are now the objects of their tender and most affectionate solicitude? . . . Must not the consciousness of their condition throw a dark shade over the brightest scenes of eternity? The wife may have to shed the tear of unavailing sorrow over the object of her conjugal love, and the Christian parent be doomed to carry into the regions of light and peace something of that feeling which agonised the soul of a holy monarch on the death



of a profligate child ; ‘O my son Absalom! my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!’”<sup>1</sup>

Now if what we have said about the sole permanence of that element of friendship which is based on religion be true, the happiness of righteous souls will not be marred by the exclusion from Paradise or the separation by the impassable gulf of those with whom they had held familiar intercourse on earth. All that was earthly and carnal in their affection will have vanished and be as though it had never been ; for though the memory must be ineffaceable, it will leave no sting behind. That complete conformity to the Divine Will, which will be reached through our unbroken communion with Christ and the enjoyment of His absorbing love, will enable us to accept without a murmur or regret God’s judgments, whatever they may be, upon ourselves or others. We are sure that it will be so, for He has promised that we shall be “equal to the angels.” Those blest beings know the judicial sufferings, which their companions, who sinned and “kept not their first estate,” are now enduring, and yet there is not the least intimation ever given that this knowledge is permitted to

<sup>1</sup> MUSTON: *Future Recognition*, p. 226.

traverse that pure delight, which the Scriptures point to as their precious inheritance.

“ Fear not the prospect of the realms of woe  
Shall mar thy bliss, or thence sad thoughts arise  
To blunt thy sense of heavenly ecstasies.  
There if thy heart with warm devotion glow  
Meet for thy place, 'twill solace thee to know  
No friend of thine, mid those keen agonies  
In that dark prison-house of torment lies ;  
For none is there but is of God the foe,  
An alien then from thee. The ties of blood  
And earth's most sacred bonds are but a twine  
Of gossamer, compared with what is owed  
To Him, the Lord of all ! ” <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BISHOP MANT: *The Happiness of the Blessed Dead*, p. 118.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### Christ's Descent into Hell a Witness to the Perfection of His Manhood.

THERE are two articles in the Apostles' Creed, the Descent into Hell and the Communion of Saints, intimately connected with the subject upon which we are treating, but neither of them found a place in its earliest form. The Creeds were not compiled whole and entire at any definite time, but after their first issue admitted of and also received later developments. Their main use in early times was as a test of belief for those who desired to be enrolled in the Christian Society; the Creed was taught them as the last lesson of the preparation before Holy Baptism. This would obviously be both shorter and simpler in early than in later times, the necessity for more definite safeguards of the truth increasing with the growth of heresy. The belief in Christ's descent into hell found no expression in the most ancient draughts

The article, either of the Roman or the Oriental Creeds:<sup>1</sup> it  
 "He de- first appeared in the Arian Creed of the Council of  
 scended into hell," Ariminum<sup>2</sup> about the middle of the fourth century,  
 absent from the earliest and in the Aquileian<sup>3</sup> Creed at the close of it, that  
 Creeds. is, after the spread of the Apollinarian heresy,<sup>4</sup>  
 which, we believe, it was mainly intended to  
 counteract. The antiquity of the doctrine, however,  
 The anti- is much greater, and there is hardly any other that  
 quity of the belief in it. is more truly Catholic, for it is testified to by an  
 almost unbroken chain of Patristic evidence from  
 the Apostolic Fathers to the end of the fourth  
 century. Indeed, there was scarcely any great  
 writer during that period who did not dwell upon  
 it, though the greatest diversity of opinion was  
 held as to what was meant by "hell," as well as  
 concerning the object that was attained by Christ's  
 descent and sojourn therein.

The language of prophecy had created a pre-  
 sumption in favour of the belief; the Psalmist had  
 predicted it,<sup>5</sup> and the Apostle,<sup>6</sup> speaking under the

<sup>1</sup> Sciendum sane est quod in Ecclesiæ Romanæ symbolo non habetur additum, *descendit ad inferna*; sed neque in Orientis Ecclesiæ habetur hic sermo.—Ruffinus in *Expos. Symb.* § 20.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Socrat. *Ecc. Hist.* ii. 37. Theodor. *Ecc. Hist.* ii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> In the Aquileian Creed the words were *descendit in inferna*.

<sup>4</sup> This heresy was condemned by the Council of Rome 374 A.D., of Antioch 378 A.D., and of Constantinople 381 A.D.

<sup>5</sup> Ps. xvi. 10.

<sup>6</sup> ACTS ii. 25-27.

guidance of the Holy Spirit, had set his seal to the interpretation; "for David," he says, "speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, . . . therefore did my heart rejoice and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Moreover, he adds<sup>1</sup> that the Psalmist spake this with a prophetic consciousness of Christ's Resurrection.

Prophetic  
anticipa-  
tion.

It is quite true that the words were capable of a meaning which would limit the reference simply to the death and burial<sup>2</sup> which preceded His Resurrection, for hell or Sheol is often used in the Old Testament for the grave, and the soul of man not infrequently indicates his person merely; indeed, it has been even at times regarded as a synonym for

<sup>1</sup> προφήτης οὖν ὑπάρχων . . . προῖδὼν ἐλάλησεν περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως κ.τ.λ. νν. 30, 31.

<sup>2</sup> "To see corruption" is the translation of the LXX., *ιδεῖν διαφθόραν*. The Vulg. and Syr. Vers. agree, but the more general meaning of the Hebrew *תּוֹבָא* is the pit, *i.e.* the grave. In this case the second clause is merely a poetic expansion of the first. It has been objected that if "the pit" is the right rendering, it makes it a prophecy that He would not be buried, which was not fulfilled; but this is to misunderstand the phrase "seeing the grave," which is not simply being buried, but "abiding in" the grave; just as "to see life" is not to live, but to abide in life. The same expression recurs in Ps. xlix. 9, "That he should still live for ever and not see corruption," or the pit.

his body.<sup>1</sup> In the Law<sup>2</sup> it is written, "If a soul touch any unclean thing . . . he also shall be unclean"; and, "the soul that eateth it shall be cut off"; again by the Psalmist,<sup>3</sup> "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave."

To accept this interpretation, however, would be a distinct narrowing of the real significance of which the expression is capable; moreover, it would render the introduction of the clause, "He descended into hell," into the creed otiose and needless, for it already contained the declaration that He "was dead and buried."

Evidence  
from the  
New Testa-  
ment.

There are two other passages in Holy Scripture which support this doctrine; the first<sup>4</sup> was written by the Apostle who had quoted the above prophecy of Christ's deliverance from Hades, and it appears to establish the doctrine in question; "Christ also hath once suffered . . . being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah."

<sup>1</sup> Beza so translated it, *Non derelinques cadaver meum in sepulchra*, but he changed it in a later edition, because he said some persons were offended by the rendering.—Ed. Test. 1532.

<sup>2</sup> LEV. v. 2; vii. 25.

<sup>3</sup> PS. xlix. 15.

<sup>4</sup> 1 S. PET. iii. 18, 20.

This, however, like the former passage, has been explained away so as to furnish no corroborative evidence of Christ's descent into hell; but it will be shown in the following chapter that although a goodly array of divines<sup>1</sup> have been reluctant to admit it, nothing less can satisfy the strict rules of legitimate and unprejudiced criticism.

The second passage<sup>2</sup> is the declaration of S. Paul that Christ, before His Ascension, "descended first into the lower parts of the earth." It is not absolutely certain how far the descent was carried in the Apostle's mind, whether only to the earth by the Incarnation, or under the earth by the descent into hell; but the antithesis of the following verse, "ascended up far above all heavens," at least suggests that in the first clause he intended the parts lower than the earth, *i.e.* Hades. It was so understood by most ancient writers,<sup>3</sup> and an almost identical phrase, *κατελθόντα εἰς τὰ κατώτατα*, was made in the Greek translation of the Aquileian Creed the equivalent of the Latin *descendit in inferna*. Again, in the Sirmian Creed "the parts under the earth" were clearly understood as implying more

<sup>1</sup> Pearson, Lightfoot, Hammond, and others.

<sup>2</sup> *κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς*.—EPH. iv. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Iren. *adv. Hær.* v. 31. Origen *in Matt.* Hom. 31. So also Tertullian, Jerome, and others.

than the grave; for it is said that on Christ's descent thither "the door-keepers of Hades shuddered at the sight of Him."<sup>1</sup> It cannot, however, be denied that not a few writers of note<sup>2</sup> in later times have held that the language of S. Paul is fully satisfied by a reference to Christ's Incarnation, and that his thoughts were not carried further than His condescension in coming down to earth.

The conclusion is therefore forced upon us that there is no incontestable evidence, or at all events none that has been suffered to pass unchallenged, in the direct statements of Holy Scripture to establish the doctrine. The absence of this, however, is no justification for the action of the American Church, which has determined on these grounds to leave the recitation of this Article of the Creed optional. Indirect proofs are sometimes the strongest; certainly in this case they furnish all that can be needed. Let us consider the chief of them.

The witness  
to His  
doctrine  
afforded by  
Christ's  
humanity.

The irrefutable evidence of Christ's perfect Manhood necessitates the belief that His soul, like the souls of all men, passed to the place of departed spirits on its separation from the body, for it is an essential condition of death. The whole history of

<sup>1</sup> ὃν πυλῶροι ἄδου ἰδόντες ἐφριξαν.—Socrat. *Eccl. Hist.* ii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Beza, Calvin, Schüttgen, Winer, etc.



the Life of our Lord in the Gospels sets forth the truth of His human Nature; He lived as Man among men, sharing their lot, made like unto His brethren in all things with the single exception of being without sin. He suffered, died, and was buried; and just as He bore our nature in life, so also He bore it in death, and His human spirit entered into that place of waiting appointed by God as the habitation of disembodied souls between death and the resurrection.

Before the statement was embodied in a creed that He was "perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting," the fact of the departure of His spirit to Hades was alleged again and again by the Fathers<sup>1</sup> and Doctors of the Church in opposition to the false teaching of that heresy which denied the reality and completeness of His Manhood, by asserting that the Divine Logos supplied the place of the rational soul.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Huic legi satisfecit, forma humanæ mortis apud inferos fructus.—*Tert. de Anima*, c. 55. Legem mortuorum servare, IREN. *adv. Hær.* v. 26. Ad infernas sedes, id quod homini debitum videtur esse, penetravit, S. HIL. *Tract. in Psalm liii.* Quam descensionem Dominus ad consummationem veri hominis non recusavit, *id. in Psalm cxxxviii.*

For the use of this fact as an argument against the heretics, cf. ATHAN. iv. *Dialog. de Trinitate* and *de Incarn. Christi*; Theodoret. *in Psalm xvi. in fine.*

<sup>2</sup> The Apollinarians began by denying that He assumed any

There can be little doubt that the primary object for making the descent into hell an Article of the Creed, was to supply a constant and accepted witness to the perfection of Christ's Manhood. Nevertheless there is abundant evidence in early writings that He had other objects in view of a special kind, or that other effects were produced by His sojourn in Hades. These will be considered hereafter; but there is one view which came into prominence at the Reformation that may fitly be considered here, because it is directly refuted by the kindred clause in the Creed, which declares the perfection of Christ's Godhead, "perfect God" as well as "perfect man."

The Calvinistic view of Christ's descent into hell.

The popularity of the belief was due to the influence of Calvin. He maintained that "hell" must here be interpreted as the place in which the souls of the damned are awaiting their final sentence, and that the theory that Christ suffered as "a surety" for man necessitated the belief that He must have experienced all the pains and sufferings of lost souls.<sup>1</sup>

part of the human soul; thus Athanasius says of them: *σάρκα μόνην προσομολογούντες*, *contr. Apoll.* ii. 17; but afterwards they allowed to him the sensitive soul (*ψυχὴ*), but not the rational (*νοῦς*).—*SOCR. Eccl. Hist.* ii. 46.

In qua questione Apollinaristae testimoniis evangelicis victi, mentem, quæ rationalis est anima hominis, defuisse in anima Christi, sed pro hac ipsum Verbum in eo finisse, dixerunt.—*S. AUG. de Hæres.* 55.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. CALV. *Instit.* i. 15. 4; 12. 18. ii. 3. 6; 10. 5.

Sometimes it was held that He did this during that hour when His Father's Face was hidden from Him upon the Cross, but more generally it was taught that this awful experience was endured when His disembodied soul passed to the place of torment or descended into hell.

The history of the Lambeth Articles reveals the extent to which Calvinism had laid hold of the leading scholars and divines of the day. In the controversies which raged in Cambridge at the close of the sixteenth century, an opponent of Genevan theology excited the almost unanimous disapproval of the authorities, because he ventured among other things to censure a notorious treatise,<sup>1</sup> in which the Article of the Apostles' Creed on Christ's descent into hell had been expounded as expressive of His mental sufferings in the place of the damned.

It was well pointed out,<sup>2</sup> however, that the advocates of the popular belief had no higher ground to rely upon than the teaching of Calvin and Bullinger; while those who took the contrary side brought with them the universal consent, and all the Fathers of both the Greek and Latin Churches.

<sup>1</sup> Barret, Fellow of Caius College, preached at Great S. Mary's, April 29th, 1595, against the prevailing Calvinism, denouncing vehemently PERKINS'S *Armilla aurea*, in which Calvinism was pushed to its furthest limits.

<sup>2</sup> STRYPE'S *Annals*, i. ch. xxxi.

It is a source of satisfaction that with the disappearance of Calvinistic influence<sup>1</sup> upon modern Theology such a perverted view of the object of Christ's descent into hell has practically ceased to find any support; but it is worth while to show that there are facts which ought to have rendered it untenable from the first.

The impossibility of accepting Calvin's teaching.

It is inconsistent with Christ's promise to the penitent thief that after death they would be together "in Paradise"; and it is incompatible with His sinless Nature that He could ever have endured the torments of the lost. The chief ingredient in the pangs of hell must be the agonies of an accusing conscience. It is this that is most aptly symbolised by the figure of the undying worm. But no such sense of sin could have found a place in One Who was shielded from the inroads of sin in any form by the very Presence of His Divinity; for the union of the Godhead with the manhood was maintained in death no less than in life.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is said that though this view of Christ's descent was still held by Calvinists in the last century, it has now been suffered to drop out of the theology of that school.—Cf. OXENHAM, *Cath. Doctr. of the Atonement*, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> *Secundum Divinitatem veram, quæ nec loco tenetur nec fine concluditur, totus fuit in sepulchro cum carne, totus in inferno cum anima.*—FULGENTIUS, *ad Trasimundum* iii. 34.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### Christ's Preaching to the Spirits in Prison.

THE passage from the First Epistle of S. Peter, quoted in the preceding chapter, in support of this doctrine, was used by Pearson for a very different purpose, viz., as a proof of the pre-existence of Christ. From these words, he says, "it appeareth that Christ preached by the same Spirit by the virtue of which He was raised from the dead ; but that Spirit was not His soul, but something of a greater power. Christ did preach unto those men which lived before the Flood, even while they lived, and consequently He was before it. For though this was not done by an immediate act of the Son of God, as if He had personally appeared on earth, and actually preached to that old world ; but by the ministry of a prophet, by the sending of Noah, the eighth preacher of righteousness." <sup>1</sup> He rested his interpretation upon the authority of no less

Pearson's interpretation of the preaching to the spirits in prison.

<sup>1</sup> *Expos. of the Creed*, Art. ii. § 112.

a person than S. Augustine, who said that the "spirits in prison were the unbelieving who lived in the times of Noe, whose spirits, that is, souls, were shut up in the flesh and the darkness of ignorance as in a prison; to them Christ preached not in the flesh, for He had not yet become incarnate, but in the Spirit, that is, according to His divinity."<sup>1</sup> Not a few divines<sup>2</sup> have followed him, in understanding S. Peter to refer to the preaching of Noah under divine inspiration to his contemporaries, and for excluding from the passage any allusion to Christ's descent into hell. This explanation, adopted, it would seem, mainly to escape from the belief that the Gospel was preached to the dead,<sup>3</sup> is abandoned by modern interpreters as grammatically inconsistent with the plain meaning and construction of the language. There is no reference in the Greek, such as the Authorised Version implies, to the action of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed

Motives for explaining away the obvious meaning.

<sup>1</sup> Spiritus in carcere conclusi sunt increduli qui vixerunt temporibus Noe, quorum spiritus, id est, animæ erant in carne et ignorantiae tenebris velut in carcere conclusæ; Christus iis non in carne, qui nondum erat incarnatus, sed in spiritu, id est, secundum divinitatem predicavit.—*Ad Euodiam*, ep. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, Hammond, Barrow, Leighton.

<sup>3</sup> It is very obvious in the case of Barrow, who shrunk from the plain interpretation, as his language clearly shows, mainly from a dread that it would appear to support the Roman doctrine of purgatory.—Cf. *Expos. of the Creed*, iii. *in fine*.

Trinity,<sup>1</sup> but simply an antithesis between the lower and higher parts of Christ's human Nature, between His flesh and His spirit; and this is brought out in the Revised Version: "Christ also suffered for sins once . . . being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit; in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."<sup>1</sup> S. Peter The drift of S. Peter's argument. is encouraging his converts in the face of persecution and trial, and sets before them the example of Christ. Provided only that they suffered for righteousness' sake, as He did, they had no cause to fear, for nothing but good could result from their death, as from His. He was put to death in the flesh, but in that He died the just for the unjust, not because He deserved death, but simply for well-doing, His death was an immediate cause of good, for His human spirit when severed from His flesh acquired new powers of activity and usefulness, and went forth into another sphere to bear the message

<sup>1</sup> The A.V. has followed the Elzevir, which inserted τῷ before πνεύματι, but it is absent from all the old mss., and is rejected by all modern critics. Moreover, according to Middleton on the Article, it would be necessary to insert a preposition as well as the article to justify the English rendering.

<sup>2</sup> Χριστὸς ἅπαξ περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἔπαθε δίκαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων, ἵνα ἡμᾶς προσαγάγῃ τῷ θεῷ, θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκί, ζῶποιοιθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν.  
—1 Ep. iii. 18, 19.

of glad tidings to the departed spirits of men who were there detained. Even so, the analogy seems to imply, they by their patient endurance for well-doing might win souls to Christ; and it suggests the idea, which we have put forward in another chapter,<sup>1</sup> that the work and influence of good men do not cease with their death, but are carried on under purely spiritual conditions with increased force and energy in another world.

Apart from the general scope of this passage there are several expressions which deserve careful attention. What was the nature of Christ's "preaching," and what is meant by the word translated "prison," and why were the Antediluvians mentioned as the recipients of His message? If the spirits to which He preached were the spirits of men who had died impenitent, it cannot be but that He preached repentance and offered them salvation. If this be so, then we must conclude that, like the rich man in the parable, they were in a place of torment in that part of Hades which is separated from the abode of the blest and designated Paradise, or in the passage above referred to, Abraham's bosom. Two or three of the early Fathers accept this conclusion: S. Ambrose says that "Christ de-

Patristic  
views on  
the deliver-  
ance of  
sinners  
from hell.

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, ch. x.



scended to the lowest Tartarus and burst asunder the bars and gates of hell, and overthrowing the sovereignty of death recalled to life from the jaws of the devil certain souls that had been tied and bound with the chains of sin." S. Augustine dealt with the subject on several occasions, once in his book *On Heresies* condemning distinctly the tenet of those who held that Christ had proclaimed an universal pardon, and emptied hell of its inhabitants; but in another place he accepts a modification of the belief, holding that a limited number whom for some reason Christ deemed worthy of such favour, were delivered from the torments of hell.<sup>1</sup>

S. Cyril of Alexandria says that Christ rose from the dead after three days, in which He had preached to the spirits in prison; and he brings it forward as a most convincing proof of His love for man that He should "not only have offered salvation to men upon earth, but also to those who had already departed and were sitting in the caves of the abyss in darkness." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apud inferos fuit, solutisque eorum doloribus, quibus eum erat impossibilia teneri; a quibus etiam recte intelligitur solvisse et liberasse quos voluit.—Ep. clxiii. § 14. Quos ille dignos ista liberatione judicavit.—§ 5.

<sup>2</sup> τῷ μὴ μόνον ἀνασῶσαι φημί, τοὺς ἔτι ζῶντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς κατοικομένους καὶ ἐν τοῖς τῆς Ἀβύσσου μυχοῖς καθημένους ἐν σκότει — *In Joan.* xi. 2.

The natural  
inference  
from such  
views.

Supposing, then, that those to whom Christ preached were sinners, and that His preaching was followed by forgiveness and release from torment, some have drawn the conclusion that "if the fate of those dead sinners was not irrevocably fixed by death, then it must be clear and obvious to the meanest understanding that neither of necessity is ours."

The excep-  
tional char-  
acter of  
Christ's act.

It was not the case of men who in life had never been taught what is right, and had sinned through ignorance, for it is expressly noticed as an aggravation of the guilt that they had been warned again and again during God's long-suffering with them. If then we had been told that in the ordinary course of His preaching Christ had offered salvation to such men after death, the above conclusion would have been perfectly legitimate; but the circumstances were in every way most exceptional. Christ's Death was a crisis of far-reaching import, involving tremendous issues for the dead as well as the living. He had come to destroy death and sin, to spoil principalities and powers, and to triumph over them in Himself; He could furnish no stronger proof of His authority than was supplied by such an act of free pardon and liberation as is here ascribed to Him; but the very fact that all whom Satan had

bound were not released, and only a selection made, seems to indicate very clearly that the act was intended to show that He had "the keys of hell and of death," and that He could open and none could shut. But the belief that sinners were delivered from torment through Christ's descent into hell has been by no means generally accepted by the Catholic Church; indeed Gregory the Great distinctly argued that no sinners were released by this act, and that the true faith is that only those who through the grace of Christ had lived in faith and good works were delivered.<sup>1</sup> The Venerable Bede<sup>2</sup> again appeals to the teaching of the Catholic Church in proof that no unbelievers but the faithful alone were brought out of darkness into Christ's kingdom.

In the absence, then, of any positive evidence necessitating a belief that the descent of Christ into hell was followed by the pardon and deliverance of sinners, we look for some other interpretation of S. Peter's words. There is certainly nothing to forbid us from supposing that the antediluvians here spoken of, though they had been long disobedient, and had

<sup>1</sup> Vera fides per Catholicam ecclesiam docet . . . illos solummodo ab inferni claustris eripuit, quos viventes in carne per suam gratiam in fide et bona operatione servavit. *Lib.* vi. c. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Catholica fides habet . . . non incredulos inde sed fideles tantummodo, etc., on *Expos.* in 1 S. PET. iii. 19.

Reasons for believing that the spirits were those of sinners who had repented.

resisted the strivings of God's Spirit under the preaching of Noah while the ark was in preparation, yet when the Flood actually came in and his predictions were fulfilled, were brought to repentance, and sought for mercy—too late to escape the threatened doom of disobedience in death, but in time to secure the future possession of salvation and eternal deliverance from the consequences of unrepented sin. There is a strong presumption that they had been pardoned, for if not, they would have been like the rich man in the parable "in a place of torment"; but there is no intimation in Holy Scripture, and no certain testimony in the Fathers, that Christ passed in His disembodied spirit into any other sphere than that which was regarded as the waiting-place of the souls of the faithful.

What, again, was the "preaching" here spoken of? It must have been of "good tidings," for it is absolutely impossible,<sup>1</sup> as has been suggested by those who hold that they were still sinners having died impenitent, and that for such there is no place of repentance after death, that He could have preached or proclaimed their condemnation. He could not have gone to them merely

<sup>1</sup> *κηρύσσειν* is never used in the N. T. for anything but good tidings.

to heighten their misery in this way. It was the proclamation that His work of Atonement was complete, that their final salvation was secured by His Death; for this they had been waiting in patient expectance, and He hastened to become to them the herald of the good news He had to bring. To interpret otherwise would be a direct contradiction to the whole gist of the Apostle's argument, which was intended to enforce by the example of Christ the hope of doing greater good in the spirit than they had been able to do in the flesh. The character of the preaching is further revealed, when, with an almost certain reference to the same spirits, S. Peter asserts in the next chapter that "the Gospel," that is, glad tidings, was preached even to the dead.<sup>1</sup>

What is meant by "in prison" here? Does it lend any support to the idea that those detained there were undergoing penal confinement for sin and transgression? By no means necessarily. The word is used, it is true, in the New Testament for a place of penal durancè, but etymologically it is simply watch or ward, either for security or custody; and it is a term that might be applied to all who were in the waiting state, whether good or bad. Even

The meaning of the phrase "in prison."

<sup>1</sup> καὶ νεκροῖς εὐηγγελισθη, iv. 6.

if, according to general usage elsewhere in Scripture, we seem forced to allow the penal idea to enter into it, it by no means follows that the "prisoners" were unrepentant sinners. The whole conception of the Intermediate State, in so far as it is an imperfect one, is consistent with the application of the term to it even in a penal sense. To those who belonged to the Old Dispensation it is especially appropriate, for they were compelled to wait for the fulfilment of the promise, till Christ should Himself make known to them that His work was complete, and that henceforth their inheritance was placed on equal terms with that of those who should die within the pale of the Church, in the full knowledge of His finished Redemption.<sup>1</sup> But Hades under any circumstances is a state from which the souls of the faithful yearn to be delivered, where even the martyrs cry almost in impatience that the time of their emancipation may be hastened;<sup>2</sup> but if such an interpretation seems to interfere too largely with the blessedness usually attributed to the faithful departed, the expression is still capable of another meaning. This may be given fully in Bishop Horsley's words: "The invisible mansion of departed spirits, though certainly not a place of penal confinement to the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. HEB. xi. 39, 40.

<sup>2</sup> REV. vi. 10.

good, is nevertheless in some respects a prison. It is a place of seclusion from the outer world; a place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security and hope more than enjoyment. It is a place which the souls of men never would have entered had not sin introduced death, and from which there is no exit by any natural means for those who have once entered. As a place of confinement, therefore, though not of punishment, it may well be called a prison. The original word, however, in this text, imports not, of necessity, so much as this, but merely a place of safe-keeping, for so this passage might be rendered with great exactness. 'He went and preached to the spirits in safe-keeping.' The invisible mansion of departed souls is to the righteous a place of safe-keeping."

But how are we to answer the question, Why did S. Peter single out the antediluvians from the whole mass of departed souls to be the favoured recipients of the glad tidings which Christ bore at His Death to the other world?

It may have been that his thoughts were turned instinctively to these by the figure which he had in his mind and which he used in the very same sentence, showing that the waters of the Flood on which the Ark floated in safety, were the type of

Reasons for singling out the antediluvians to receive the Message.

Baptism, by which men are brought into the true Ark of Christ's Church. Possibly it was the association of these ideas alone which suggested the mention of this single class; but it is worthy of notice that there is manifest in the sacred writers a mysterious desire to connect those who perished in the Flood in an especial manner with the message of salvation brought by Christ, as though the sinners, who had suffered in the most severe and awful of all God's temporal punishments, most needed to be comforted by the glad tidings of His atoning death.<sup>1</sup>

It is the most signal example of those cases "where the final doom seems infinitely out of proportion to the lapse which incurred it." But whatever view we may take of these matters of detail, we feel confident in interpreting this passage as a testimony to the historic fact of Christ's descent into hell. It is a subject of regret therefore that the original language of the Third Article should ever have been changed.

The original  
form of the  
Third  
Article. When the Forty-two Articles were issued in 1553 A.D., that "of the going downe of Christ into Helle," was thus expressed; "as Christ died and was buried for us; so also is it to be believed that He went downe

<sup>1</sup> This is the view taken by Bishop Horsley, cf. vol. i. *Serm.* xx.



into hell. For the bodie laie in the sepulchre untill the resurrection ; but His ghoste departing from Him, was with the ghostes that were in prison or in helle, and didde preache to the same, as the place of S. Peter doeth testifie." At the second issue in 1563 A.D., the whole of the final clause was omitted. Conflicting reasons have been assigned to account for the action of Convocation, but it is almost certain that the controversies which had arisen touching Calvin's interpretation of the meaning of Christ's descent into hell contributed more than anything else to the omission of the clause. One of the Bishops<sup>1</sup> complains loudly in a paper written for the Synod in the previous year of "the great invectives between the preachers one against the other, . . . some holding that the descent was nothing else but the virtue of His Death, . . . others say that He did sustain upon the Cross the infernal pains of hell," and he bewailed "the tragedies and dissensions which may arise from consenting to or dissenting from this Article."<sup>2</sup> But whatever the cause of the omission, it cannot fail to be regarded as a subject of regret, now that there is an absolute

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Alley of Exeter.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. STRYPE'S *Annals*, i. ch. xxxi., and WHITGIFT, p. 504, ed. 18. *Life of Parker*, i. 513. MACBRIDE, *Articles*, 129, 130.

consensus of opinion among competent scholars, that the passage referred to can only be truly interpreted as a distinct testimony borne by the Holy Ghost to Christ's descent into hell.

## CHAPTER XV.

### The Deliverance of Souls from the Limbus Patrum.

IF S. Gregory was right in his assertion that the Catholic Faith knew nothing of the deliverance of sinners through the descent of our Blessed Lord to the place of departed spirits, we must look for some other explanation of the persons whose release is so often associated with that act in the early Church. The requirements of the case will be fully satisfied, if we are able to establish the belief that the souls of the patriarchs and faithful saints of the Old Dispensation received at this time an accession of happiness by being translated into a better state than that in which they had been so long waiting. It was designed by God that the Old Testament saints should not be perfected without us;<sup>1</sup> that they should wait till in the fulness of time Christ by His one oblation should offer salvation alike to us and them. He descended into Hades to be to them

The condition of the Saints of the Jewish Dispensation improved by the Incarnation.

<sup>1</sup> HEB. xi. 40.

Patristic  
testimony.  
Justin  
Martyr.

the herald of glad tidings, to certify to them that their spiritual disabilities were cancelled, and to admit them into the same Paradise of joy, in which the members of His Body await the consummation of bliss at the general Resurrection. We shall find abundant testimony to such an improved condition in the writings of the very earliest times. Justin Martyr not only states his own belief that Christ went to deliver the souls of the just and prophets; but also quotes a lost prophecy of Jeremiah in support of it: "The Lord God of Israel remembered His dead which had fallen asleep in the land of the grave, and went down to them to preach to them the glad tidings of His salvation."<sup>1</sup> This passage has not been found in any MS. of the original nor of the LXX., but there is no question that it was considered genuine in these early ages, for it is cited no less than three times by Irenæus,<sup>2</sup> at the close of the second century; but, even if it is lacking Divine authority, it is manifest that the citation of it is a distinct witness to the belief of the Fathers

Irenæus.

<sup>1</sup> Ἐμνήσθη Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς ἀπὸ Ἰσραὴλ τῶν νεκρῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν κεκοιμημένων εἰς γῆν χώματος καὶ κατέβη πρὸς αὐτοὺς εὐαγγελισασθαι αὐτοῖς τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ. — *Dial. c. Tryph.* 72.

<sup>2</sup> He refers it at one time to Isaiah (*adv. Hær.*, iii. 20. 4); at another to Jeremiah (iv. 22. 1); again he quotes it without naming the author (v. 31. 1).

who referred to it, that the deliverance of His holy ones was one object of Christ's descent into hell.

Tertullian, in showing that Christ as man was Tertullian. dead and buried, adds that "He fully complied with the same law of His Being by remaining in Hades in the form and condition of a dead man; and that He did not ascend into the heights of heaven before descending into the lower parts of the earth, that He might there make the patriarchs and prophets partakers of Himself." <sup>1</sup>

Eusebius at the beginning of his history supports Eusebius. the belief by quoting the apocryphal correspondence between Abgarus, king of Edessa, and Jesus Christ. In answer to an appeal from the king, who had heard of His miracles, our Lord promises after His Ascension to send to him one of His disciples to free him from his sufferings and give life to his people. In fulfilment of the promise Thaddeus visited his kingdom, healed Abgarus, and preached Christ, His Mission, Death, and Descent into Hades, narrating how "He burst the bars which had never yet been

<sup>1</sup> Christus Deus quia et homo mortuus secundum Scripturas et sepultus secundum easdem, hic quoque legi satisfecit, forma humanæ mortis apud inferos fructus, nec ante ascendit in sublimiora cœlorum, quam descendit in inferiora terrarum, ut illic Patriarchas et Prophetas compotes sui faceret.—*de Anima*, lv.

broken, and rose again, and also raised with Himself the dead that had slept for ages, and how He descended alone, but ascended with a great multitude to the Father.”<sup>1</sup>

The historian fixes the date of this transaction in the year in which Christ suffered.<sup>2</sup> The truth of this may well be doubted; but its apocryphal character, if clearly proved, would not detract from the value of the testimony it bears to the object of the descent into Hades. It had at least been extant long before Eusebius quoted it, for he expresses no doubt of its genuineness.

S. Cyril. One more Father will suffice, and his testimony is of importance. In the lectures which S. Cyril addressed to candidates for Baptism, containing therefore such teaching as was at the time considered necessary to be believed by Christians, in dealing with Christ's sepulchre, he says that Jesus “was

<sup>1</sup> Κατέβη εἰς τὸν ᾄδην καὶ διέσχισε φραγμὸν τὸν ἐξ αἰῶνος μὴ σχισθέντα, καὶ ἀνέστη καὶ συνήγειρε νεκροὺς τοὺς ἀπ' αἰῶνων κεκοιμημένους, καὶ πῶς κατέβη μόνος, ἀνέβη δὲ μετὰ πολλοῦ ὄχλου εἰς πατέρα αὐτοῦ.—*Eccl. Hist.* i. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius says these things were done in the 340th year, *i.e.* according to the reckoning of the Edessenes the 202d Olympiad, or the 15th year of Tiberius Cæsar, A.D. 30. The genuineness of the documents has been defended by a number of writers, but no written works of Christ were known to S. Augustine (*contra Faust*, xxviii. 4) or S. Hieron (*in Ezech.*, 44, 49), and most scholars assign their date to the close of the second century.

laid truly as man in a tomb of rock, but the rocks burst asunder through fear because of Him. He descended to the regions beneath the earth, that from them also He might redeem the just. For wouldest thou, I pray, that the living should enjoy His grace, and that, being most of them unholy ; and that those who from Adam had been imprisoned long while, should not now obtain deliverance ? ” <sup>1</sup> Again, in a later lecture, he describes how the porters of Hades were scared by the new Visitant, and how when Death fled, “ the holy prophets ran unto Him, and Moses the Lawgiver, and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob : David also, and Samuel and Esaias and John the Baptist. . . . All the Jews were ransomed whom death had devoured ; for it behoved the King who had been heralded to become the Redeemer of His noble heralds. Then each of the just said, ‘ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? ’ for the Conqueror has redeemed us.” <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ἐν μνήματι πέτρας ἐτέθη ἀληθῶς, ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλὰ πέτραι διεῖρράγησαν τῷ φόβῳ δι’ αὐτὸν, κατήλθεν εἰς τὰ καταχθόνια, ἵνα κακέϊθεν λυτρώσεται τοὺς δικαίους. ἐβόλου γὰρ, εἰπέ μοι, τοὺς μέν ζῶντας ἀπολαῦσαι τῆς χάριτος καὶ ταῦτα τῶν πλειστῶν οὐχ ὅσιων ὄντων, τοὺς δὲ ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ πολυχρονίως ἀποκεκλεισμένους μὴ τυχεῖν τῆς ἐλευθερίας ;—*Cat. iv., de Sepulchro*.

<sup>2</sup> Προσέτρεχον οἱ ἅγιοι προφήται καὶ Μωϋσῆς ὁ νομοθέτης. . . . ἐλυτρῶντο πάντες οἱ δίκαιοι οὓς κάτεκτεν ὁ θάνατος, ἔδει γὰρ τὸν κηρυχθέντα βασιλεα τῶν καλῶν κηρύκων γενεσθαι λυτρωτὴν κ.τ.λ. —*Cat. xiv., Mortis terror Christus*.

This belief in the effect of Christ's descent into hell laid a strong hold upon the people, and was largely expanded at an early period in the Apocryphal Gospels. The narrative contained in that

The Gospel  
of Nicodemus.

which bears the name of Nicodemus<sup>1</sup> deserves an extended notice, because we shall see hereafter how much it influenced the writings and works of art of the Middle Ages.

Karinus and Leucius, claiming to have been among the saints who arose from the grave after Christ's resurrection,<sup>2</sup> give to the synagogue at Jerusalem an account of what they had seen and heard in Hades. They begin with the record of certain messages which had come to them in preparation for the advent of Christ; this is followed by a dialogue between Satan and Hades, who is here personified, on the probable results of His coming, and a series of appeals to Hades from David and Isaiah and the rest of the saints to "open the gates that the King of Glory may come in." Then He came "in the form of a man, the Lord of

<sup>1</sup> There are several documents under the title of the Gospel of Nicodemus, which are all various forms of two books, the Acts of Pilate and the Descent of Christ into Hell. Various dates have been given for their composition. Tischendorf assigns them to the second century, but the majority of critics place them about the beginning of the fourth.

<sup>2</sup> S. MATT. xxvii. 53.



Majesty, and lighted up the eternal darkness, and burst asunder the indissoluble chains; and He stretched out His hand and said: 'Come to Me all My saints, who have My image and likeness'; and immediately all the saints were brought together under the hand of the Lord, and falling on their knees at His feet, said with one voice: Thou hast come, O Redeemer of the world, to rescue us from the powers below and from death." Then Christ stretched forth His hand and went up from the powers below, all the saints following, singing praises for their deliverance, and crying Amen, Alleluia. The narrative further describes how the Lord gave them into the hand of Michael, who kept the gates of Paradise, and how on entering they were met by Enoch and Elijah, and the penitent thief, the last of whom tells of the manner of his conversion, and the fulfilment of the promise which the Saviour had made to him, upon hearing which all the patriarchs and prophets who had been rescued gave thanks for the grace vouchsafed to them.<sup>1</sup>

If it should create any surprise that Adam is here numbered with the saints who were released, we may mention that we have the authority of S.

<sup>1</sup> The above is a brief abstract for the most part literally translated from the Latin; Editio princeps.

Augustine<sup>1</sup> for saying that there was a general consensus of belief throughout the Church that he was to be placed in the category of the faithful.

The belief  
in the  
middle  
ages.

There is little doubt that this description greatly influenced the treatment of the subject when it was brought prominently into notice in the middle ages. It was frequently represented in the *extractio animarum*, or "the Harrowing of Hell," in the mysteries of the twelfth and later centuries.

In the subtle discussion of the Schoolmen, Purgatory, as the temporary abode after the death of the baptized, was distinguished from the dwelling-place of the souls of the patriarchs and prophets who lived before the Incarnation, from Adam to John the Baptist, which was designated "the Limbus<sup>2</sup> of the fathers," though at first it was by no means clearly defined what the character of this place of confinement exactly was.

Dante's  
teaching.

In the thirteenth century Dante described the inhabitants of it as "blameless of sin," but as suffering because "they lived before the Gospel, and

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. ad Evodium*, c. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Limbus is of doubtful meaning, but in classical Latin it meant a fringe or border. See Virg. *Aen.* iv. 137; Ov. *Met.* v. 51. Hence "the border-land" of hell, as a place in proximity to it; but it acquired in its Italian form *limbo* a worse meaning, as a place of confinement and torture—"in Tartar limbo, worse than hell."—Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors*, iv. 2.

served not God aright," and he represents the spirit of Virgil describing the descent into Hades of Christ, as follows :

“ I was new to that estate  
When I beheld a Puissant One arrive  
Amongst us, with victorious trophy crown'd.  
He forth the shade of our first parent drew,  
Abel his child, and Noah, righteous man,  
Of Moses, lawgiver, for faith approved,  
Of patriarch Abraham, and David king,  
Israel with his sire, and with his sons,  
Nor without Rachel, whom so hard he won,  
And others many more, whom He to bliss  
Exalted. Before then, be thou assured,  
No spirit of human kind was ever saved.”<sup>1</sup>

In Christian art the subject assumed a somewhat sterner form, and the souls of the patriarchs were allegorically painted as issuing from the jaws of a monster full of awful teeth, and vomiting forth flames. Fra Angelico, however, treated it in less terrible colours, though in a most vivid and graphic manner. In a well-known picture of the scene, the door of Hades is thrown open, and beneath it, crushed by the fall, is writhing in agony one of the demons who had guarded the entrance; other evil spirits slink away affrighted and hide among the rocks, while a long procession issues from a cavern in eager haste running to welcome the Divine

Representations in  
Christian  
Art.

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, Canto iv.

Visitant;<sup>1</sup> Adam grasps His hand, Eve follows closely behind; Abel is clad in the skins of beasts that he had slain in his accepted sacrifice; Moses is recognised by the horns of light, David by his crown; the rest are indistinguishable. As an indication of the belief of the times that the deliverance was not universal, but only of those who had earned the ransom by their faithfulness, all are surrounded by the nimbus of saintliness; while in another picture by the same artist some sinful souls are depicted as struggling in vain in the grasp of evil spirits to escape from captivity.<sup>2</sup>

This belief, stript of all that was legendary and fanciful, received indorsement at the hands of our earliest Reformers. In "the Institution of a Christian man" they did not hesitate to assert that Christ "spoiled hell and brought with Him from thence all the souls of those righteous and good men, which from the Fall of Adam died in the favour of God, and in the faith and belief of their own Saviour, which was then to come."

The opinion  
of the  
early Re-  
formers.

<sup>1</sup> The painter seems here to catch an incident noted by the writer of the Apocryphal Gospel, "The Holy prophets *ran* unto Him."

<sup>2</sup> The whole connexion of this subject with Christian Art is dealt with in a very interesting manner by Mrs. Jameson in the *History of Our Lord*, vol. ii. p. 250.

With this testimony we close our investigations into the history of the interpretation of the article of the Creed that speaks of Christ's descent into hell. We have little doubt but that it was introduced into the formulary of the faith for the main purpose of upholding the doctrine of Christ's perfect humanity. It was the necessary consequence of the death of every man that his spirit should depart thither, and the God-Man accepted the necessity; but in what way the advent of Christ's spirit affected those who had preceded Him, can only be matter of conjecture. That Hades was moved by His Presence, it is impossible to doubt, and it rests on the almost continuous teaching of all the Christian centuries; further, that the souls of the faithful saints and patriarchs of the Old Dispensation were the first to benefit by it occupies the chief place in that teaching. We accept it, therefore, in confidence, and read in it at least one illustration of the text, capable no doubt of fulfilment in many ways, but in none more really than in this, "that they without us should not be made perfect."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> HEB. xi. 40. For what is meant in this Epistle by 'perfection' cf. *infra*, p. 168 n.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### The Constitution of the Invisible Church.

IT will help us largely to realise the possibilities of development in the spiritual condition of the soul after death, if we can attain to an adequate conception of the manifold and potent influences under which it may be brought in the Invisible Church. The extreme difficulty of comprehending anything that lies beyond the range of human ken fosters a strong disposition to limit our view to that part of the Church which is here in our midst. We throw into the background of our thought and reflection that other part, which exists in infinitely vaster proportions within the veil; and yet we lose almost more than we can express by this strange indifference to what is unseen. It is equally a part of the Body of Christ with that which is visible; for He is "the Lord both of the dead and living."<sup>1</sup> He has "the keys of hell and of death";<sup>2</sup> indeed His

Christ's  
kingdom  
visible and  
invisible.

<sup>1</sup> ROM. xiv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> REV. i. 18.

dominion is absolute and universal, the empire over which He rules is one and undivided, for we are told that at the end "The Son of man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom"—not kingdoms—"all things that offend";<sup>1</sup> it will not be from that part alone which will then be militant here on earth, but from that also which is expectant in the Intermediate State. It is the combination of the whole, the visible and invisible, that forms His kingdom.

Now the application of the title of kingdom to the Invisible proves that this part of His dominion, no less than that which the eye can see, is duly organised and governed by law and order. The unseen world of spiritual beings, then, is not merely an aggregate of saints gathered together somewhere in a promiscuous assemblage, with no common aim or work to kindle united interests and call out unfailing energies. It is a host, it is true, that no man can number, that is swelling and increasing with inconceivable rapidity, but with all its unmeasured vastness, it is a kingdom, not chaos. It is a kingdom too in which law and order not only prevail but are supreme; the King upon His throne is the centre of its unity: His subjects are bound to

What is involved in the title of kingdom.

Its organisation.

<sup>1</sup> S. MATT. xiii. 41.

Him by the indissoluble ties of loyalty and devotion ; He has armies fully equipped to protect the integrity of His empire ; ambassadors to make known in every part His sovereign Will, and spiritual agents to advance the welfare of all that belong to Him from the least unto the greatest.

Foremost amongst those who thus do His bidding in the Invisible Church are the countless hosts of angels. It was distinctly revealed to the Hebrew converts that in joining the Church of Christ they had “come to an innumerable company of angels.”<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere they are described as an army or spiritual hosts<sup>2</sup> or legions ;<sup>3</sup> and the figures are very significant, for they bespeak at once discipline and cohesion and community of interest.

The angelic  
host.

The legions of the angels are officered by spirits of differing rank and with divers functions ; there are princes and rulers ; there are also archangels and cherubim and seraphim. At the head of the

<sup>1</sup> HEB. xii. 22. The agency of the angels and their influence upon the Church visible is foreshadowed in our Lord’s promise to Nathanael, when he was enrolled into Christ’s Body: “Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”—S. JOHN i. 51.

<sup>2</sup> The title “Sabaoth” is the military expression for “armies.” “Mahanaim,” the twin hosts, was the name given by Jacob to the place where “the angels of God met him.”—GEN. xxxii. 2. Cf. DAN. iv. 35.

<sup>3</sup> S. MATT. xxvi. 53.



angelic hierarchy is Michael,<sup>1</sup> the Guardian and Champion of God's chosen people Israel; then there is Gabriel,<sup>2</sup> the great herald of the Incarnation with some special charge, we can well conceive, over the Body of which the Son of Man is the Head. Both of these are named on the authority of Inspiration; two others, Raphael<sup>3</sup> and Uriel,<sup>4</sup> on the subordinate testimony of the Apocrypha: the one to be an angel of mercy, as the Divinely-commissioned healer; the other to reflect in his operations, as well as in his name, the Light and Fire of God.<sup>5</sup> Besides these there are three others, as the Jews believed, Ruchael,<sup>6</sup> the angel of the wind; Abdiel, the special attendant upon God, and Sammael, the messenger of death; or according to some early traditions of Christianity, Zophiel, Chamuel, and Zadkiel.<sup>7</sup> But

The seven  
archangels.

<sup>1</sup> DAN. x. 13; xii. 1; S. JUDE 9.

<sup>2</sup> DAN. viii. 16; S. LUKE i. 19, 26.

<sup>3</sup> TOBIT v. 4, 15; xi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> 2 ESDRAS iv. 1; v. 20; x. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Milton in consequence of his name makes him the guardian angel of the Sun:

"Saw within ken a glorious angel stand,  
The same whom John saw also in the sun."

*Paradise Lost*, iii. 622, 623, and 648.

<sup>6</sup> So HEB. i. 7; ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα. It is a witness to the belief that the angels regulated the works of nature.

<sup>7</sup> Zophiel was one of those who guarded the entrance of Paradise with a flaming sword.—GEN. iii. 24. Chamuel wrestled with Jacob at the brook Jabbok.—GEN. xxxii. 24. Zadkiel pointed to

whatever they are named we are told that they are "seven,"<sup>1</sup> and seven is the perfect number.<sup>2</sup> It teaches that the army of heaven is under perfect control.

The twofold  
office of  
angels.

The angels have a twofold office, first as ministering before God, secondly as servants of men.<sup>3</sup> They are "ministering spirits"; *i.e.* they bear their part in the great Ritual Worship of the spiritual Temple, fulfilling a priestly office in presenting before God the prayers of the saints. In the vision which S. John saw, an "angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."<sup>4</sup> And again, "all the angels stood round about the throne . . . and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God."<sup>5</sup> The angels also are "sent forth to minister<sup>6</sup> for them who shall be heirs of

the ram caught in the thicket.—GEN. xxii. 13. On the whole subject, cf. HERZOG, *Real-Encyclopädie*, s.v. ENGEL.

<sup>1</sup> TOBIT xii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *supra*, ch. i.

<sup>3</sup> HEB. i. 14. λειτουργικά πνεύματα. The use of λειτουργεῖν is to serve God in a special office; to minister to Him in holy things. Cf. 1 SAM. ii. 11; NEHEM. x. 39; EZEK. xlv. 30; S. LUKE i. 23; HEB. viii. 2; x. 11.

<sup>4</sup> REV. viii. 3.

<sup>5</sup> REV. vii. 11.

<sup>6</sup> It is not the same word as was used in the first part of the verse, "ministering," but εἰς διακονίαν, "for the service" of men,

salvation"; *i.e.* they perform helpful offices towards men, both before and after death. They are revealed to us in Holy Scripture as warning,<sup>1</sup> strengthening,<sup>2</sup> illuminating,<sup>3</sup> and delivering<sup>4</sup> those who are alive upon the earth; and they are represented as bearing the departing soul to its place of waiting between death and judgment. It is our Lord's Own testimony that Lazarus "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."<sup>5</sup>

As we are told that the angels throw their protecting ægis over the bodies of men, so also do their "ministries" extend to the special welfare of the soul; for it is not only written that "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone";<sup>6</sup> but also, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth";<sup>7</sup> and we cannot doubt that if the recovery to the fold is a source of rejoicing to them, the subsequent condition of the recovered soul, its progressive holiness and purification in Paradise, must be an object of the keenest interest and watchfulness. Yet further, if we believe

<sup>1</sup> S. MATT. ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> DAN. x. 18.

<sup>3</sup> DAN. viii. 18.

<sup>4</sup> PS. xci. 11, 12; DAN. iii. 28; ACTS xii. 7, 10.

<sup>5</sup> S. LUKE xvi. 22.

<sup>6</sup> PS. xci. 11, 12.

<sup>7</sup> S. LUKE xv. 10.

that a guardian angel is attached to each individual, it follows almost of necessity that its controlling power is not bounded by the earthly life of the object of its care, but that it continues to be exerted, and exerted with greater success, when the spirit has passed into that sphere where there is less to thwart and contradict its influence.

In addition, then, to the effect produced upon the disembodied soul by the sanctifying Presence of Christ in Paradise, Whose office it is to draw souls to the Father, wherever He is, we cannot ignore the efficient help of those spiritual beings, who stand before His throne day and night, ever ready to act for Him in the service of men.

There are in the Invisible Church, besides the angels, "the spirits of just men," those who have completed their earthly probation, whose perfect holiness<sup>1</sup> hereafter is assured to them through their entrance into Paradise. We have seen abundant

<sup>1</sup> "Ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect." *προσεληλύθατε . . . πνεύμασι δικαίων τετελειωμένων.*—HEB. xii. 22-3. This passage has been isolated from the rest of the Epistle and interpreted as contradicting the idea of progress after death. Probably the expression is of only special application. The "perfection" of the Epistle is the being brought near to God, vii. 11, 19, the result of the fulfilment of the promised redemption. It was this state into which the Old Testament saints were admitted through the Incarnation and Atonement, xi. 40. This

proof that they do not remain there in a state of torpor and insensibility, but are ever advancing in spiritual and intellectual knowledge, and in all that tends to complete sanctification. There must, then, be souls in the Intermediate State at different stages of progressive holiness, and such inequality almost necessitates the belief that the more advanced will be able to help on those who are behind and less perfect than themselves. In estimating, therefore, the agencies at work "for the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the Body of Christ" within the veil, we may not ignore the spiritual ministries of the souls of the faithful.

Then in addition to the agencies of the holy angels and of just men in advancing God's kingdom in the Invisible Church, or rather in co-operation with them, there is the One informing quickening Spirit by Whom the whole life of the Body of Christ is sustained. The teaching of Scripture, though it may be only indirectly expressed, points to the

The souls  
of the  
righteous

The agency  
of the Holy  
Spirit in  
the world  
of spirits.

τέλος they could not receive "without us": it was reached by both alike and simultaneously. No one can say that any of us have been "made perfect" in the ordinary sense of the word, but we have received the fulness of the promise: we can draw near to God in full assurance of faith. "The spirits made perfect" are probably those spoken of in xi. 40, and if so, this expression in no way traverses the Catholic doctrine that spiritual sanctification goes on even till the judgment. PHIL. i. 6; 1 COR. i. 7, 8.

continuity of the operations of the Holy Ghost after death. There is one Body and one Spirit; and wherever Christ is, there is His Spirit; and if in the Church on earth it is His Presence dwelling in the hearts of its individual members that justifies the apostolic assertion that they become thereby nothing less than “temples of the Holy Ghost”;<sup>1</sup> if it is from this Divine source that every good and holy motive, every righteous and charitable act takes its spring; if it is through His enlightenment that glimpses of the eternal truth are revealed to men; or again, if the Perfect Life is rendered more capable of imitation because the Holy Spirit takes the things and the words of Christ and makes them intelligible to men; if all this is accomplished in a state where there is never absent the countervailing opposition of our lower nature, distorting, impeding, thwarting every right disposition, so that it has been said, “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”;<sup>2</sup> then who shall be able to measure the extent of the same Spiritual Agency and operations in that state, where all such obstacles have been taken away, where it can no

<sup>1</sup> 1 COR. iii. 16 and vi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> GAL. v. 17.

longer be said that "the corruptible body presseth down the soul,"<sup>1</sup> but the emancipated spirit will be free to hold unrestrained communion with the Spirit of God and Christ? All we can say is, that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty";<sup>2</sup> there is freedom to yield ourselves without let or hindrance of any kind to the Divine leading, till at last "we all, with unveiled face reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> WISDOM ix. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 2 COR. iii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* iii. 18. Revised Version.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### Possibilities of Salvation for the Heathen in the Intermediate State.

N<sup>O</sup> consideration of the Intermediate State would be at all adequate which took no account of the souls of the many millions who have died both in heathen and Christian lands without ever having learned the way of salvation. We do not purpose in this investigation to deal with the condition of those who may be regarded as lost; the whole question of the doom of the wicked is one from entering upon which our instincts repel us. But there has been so much that seems to us to be utterly baseless and false assumed with regard to the future of the heathen, that we feel constrained to vindicate the belief of the Catholic Church from the wholly untenable position which too many of her teachers have taken up. Now, when we bring ourselves to face this great problem, two questions present themselves for consideration. First, can the heathen be judged, as it is asserted that Christians

Untenable  
views on  
the destiny  
of the  
heathen.



will be, by the deeds done in the body? In other words, will their rewards or punishments be regulated by the way in which they have obeyed the law of conscience that is written in their hearts?

Or, secondly, will they, as being without the pale of the Church and the consequent promises of Holy Scripture, be consigned to final and irretrievable ruin?

S. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, has been commonly supposed to answer the first question in the affirmative: "God, who will render to every man according to his deeds; . . . for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another;) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." <sup>1</sup>

S. Paul's  
teaching.

<sup>1</sup> ROM. ii. 6-16.

It will be observed that this declaration does not apply to all Gentiles, but is limited to those who are found, without any Divine teaching, to have been guided by the voice of conscience to do what is revealed to others by the direct voice of God ; it is those who do "the things contained in the law" of whom he speaks. We should have imagined that no one would have grudged such as these the hope of salvation ; but even our own branch of the Catholic Church at one period committed itself to their condemnation.

The witness  
of the  
Homilies.

In the Homily on good works, we read, "If a heathen man clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and do such other like works ; yet, because he doth them not in faith for the honour and love of God, they be but dead, vain and fruitless works to him. Faith it is that doth commend the work to God ; for, as S. Augustine saith, whether thou wilt or no, that work that cometh not of faith is naught ; where the faith of Christ is not the foundation, there is no good work, what building soever we make."<sup>1</sup>

But, as we said, it is only a small number of whom S. Paul speaks ; he says nothing of those who, however conscientiously, live according to principles

<sup>1</sup> The passage alluded to in S. AUG. is *Contr. Julianum*, lib. iv. c. 30.

which God has nowhere inculcated. What is to become of the masses of heathen who, while fulfilling the laws of Paganism, violate the fundamental laws of purity and holiness? Can they possibly earn salvation as the reward of their deeds? The salvation of the soul means the entrance upon that state in which it will enjoy the Vision of God. Now Scripture has laid down very clearly what the qualification is for this fruition. It is holiness; The one qualification for the Vision of God. "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It is purity: "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God": or again, "there shall enter in," that is, to the presence of God, "nothing that defileth." But in many Pagan religions the highest standard of life is based upon immorality; lust and sensuality enter into the observance of their sacred mysteries; what therefore the votaries of such systems may have conscientiously sought as their greatest good may be simply an abomination and utterly hateful in God's sight. It is quite inconsistent that a character formed upon such false and immoral practices and principles should ever be admissible to the Presence of Him, Who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." It is inconceivable that a probation, under which the lives of such heathen, no matter how deep the natural

ignorance in which they have been sunk, is passed on earth, can satisfy the all-holy God, or that the way in which they have yielded obedience to Pagan laws of right and wrong can possibly give them that reward of salvation which God has fenced and guarded from the least touch of impurity.

However much the feelings of charity may dispose us to accept the plausible and attractive principle that God will judge the heathen according to his conscientious fulfilment of his own laws, whatever their nature, there are insurmountable objections to it. It is distinctly condemned moreover by our Confessions of Faith. The 18th of the Thirty-nine Articles teaches decisively that obedience to the natural conscience cannot possibly entitle a man to salvation; yea, it rejects the idea so strongly as to affix an anathema upon those who venture to suggest it: "They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law and the light of Nature. For Holy Scriptures doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ whereby men must be saved."

The 18th  
Article.

The second question that we propounded is this: Can the heathen obtain salvation without the pale

of the Church? There is little doubt that the early Fathers, with few exceptions, gave a peremptory answer in the negative. Justin Martyr,<sup>1</sup> Clement of Alexandria,<sup>2</sup> Tertullian,<sup>3</sup> and S. Chrysostom<sup>4</sup> spoke less despairingly than their fellows; but the Patristic saying, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, gathered up into an axiomatic form the general belief of primitive Times.<sup>5</sup> It became stereotyped through the teaching of S. Augustine;<sup>6</sup> and all through the mediæval ages the very gloomiest views prevailed, till the instincts of Dante, whose mind was cast in a different mould, rose in rebellion against the prevailing indifference of the age, which could consign the millions of heathendom without compunction to irretrievable ruin. But so ingrained was the belief, that it was suffered to cast a shadow over the Paradiso; at least Dante hesitated to

Is salvation  
attainable  
*extra*  
*ecclesiam*?

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.* i. 56.

<sup>2</sup> πρὸ τῆς τοῦ Κυρίου παρουσίας εἰς δικαιοσύνην "Ἑλλῆσιν ἀναγκαία φιλοσοφία. *Strom.* i.

<sup>3</sup> De philosophis quos superbia severitatis et saevitia disciplinæ ab omni timore securos, nonnullus etiam afflatus Veritatis adversus Deos erigit. *ad Nat.* i. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Hom.* vi. in *EP. AD ROM.*

<sup>5</sup> Cf. ἐὰν μὴ πιστεύωσιν εἰς τὸ αἷμα Χριστοῦ κἀκέλνοισ κρίσις ἐστίν. *IGNAT. ad Smyrn.* vi. Qui non concurrunt ad ecclesiam . . . semetipsos fraudant a vita. S. *IREN. adv. Hær.* iii. 40. Habere jam non potest Deum Patrem, qui Ecclesiam non habet matrem. S. *Cypr. de unit. eccl.*

<sup>6</sup> S. *AUG. de peccat. meritis*, c. 11. *Contr. Julian.* iv. 30.

express in words what he clearly felt about the injustice of such reckless condemnation, and satisfied himself by assuming the attitude of the agnostic, and answered the question,<sup>1</sup> Where is the justice of such a decree ? by counselling reserve :

“Nay, who ært thou, who on thy bench dost sit,  
To judge with thy short vision of a span  
The thousand miles of distance infinite ?”

The influence of Calvin's doctrines.

At the Reformation the general enlightenment failed to throw any brightness upon the destiny of the heathen, mainly through the influence of Calvin,<sup>2</sup> whose narrow views of predestination and election harmonised with the Augustinian belief. It was perpetuated, as we have seen, in the Homily of Good Works. Noel's Catechism answered the question, “Is there no hope of salvation out of the Church ?” by an unhesitating declaration that “without it there can be nothing but damnation and death.” The *Reformatio Legum*<sup>3</sup> and *The Institution of a Christian Man*,<sup>4</sup> taught precisely the same ; and it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. PLUMPTRE'S *Spirits in Prison*, p. 166, where he dwells at length upon Dante's teaching.

<sup>2</sup> *Instit.* iv. 1, 4.

<sup>3</sup> It denounced the wider hope as horribilis et inanis blasphemia. — *De Hær.* c. 21.

<sup>4</sup> It deals with the kindred question of unbaptized children, denying them salvation.

was not till the great divines<sup>1</sup> of the seventeenth century shook off the incubus, that the Church emancipated itself from views that were most difficult to reconcile with principles of justice and right. It is true that there are still individual teachers who cannot bring themselves to conceive of the heathen otherwise than as doomed to destruction; and it is not a little significant of the tenacity of the old faith, that the late Primate of the English Church should have found it necessary to administer a public rebuke in one of his charges. He was roused to a sense of the need by the fact that one of his clergy had actually used it as an argument for missionary effort, that, to quote his exact language, "at every ticking of the clock, in every four-and-twenty hours, from month to month and year to year, God sends a heathen straight to never-ending misery."<sup>2</sup>

Such a view as this must meet with general condemnation; that which is more consonant both with the spirit of the age and with the teaching of Scripture may be fairly represented by the following extract from one of our chief Reviews. The author of an article on "The Spiritual Theory of another Life,"

<sup>1</sup> Cf. JER. TAYLOR, *Dissuasive from Popery*, i. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Charge to the London Clergy*, 1866, quoted by PLUMPTRE, *Spirits*, etc., 184.



The growth  
 o more  
 Scriptural  
 views.

writes in reference to this subject: "It becomes every day more intolerable for the Christian mind to entertain the notion of the general or universal perdition of the heathen. Commerce and science together impress us more and more with their enormous numbers; Christianity deepens our sense of brotherhood with them all, and, consequently, of the Father's part in them; and the more impossible therefore it becomes almost daily even for the severest type of Christian mind to accept the verdict in their case—all lost. It becomes, therefore, on the other hand, every day the easier to suppose the missionaries and philanthropists, the Xaviers and Moffats, of all time and all lands, not superannuated in a blessedness foreign to all their earthly experience, but in never-ending toil experiencing a never-ending joy. Instances like these, not difficult to imagine, are suggestive of reflections bearing on the problem of that occupation for our moral energies, without which heaven would be for Pascal, and all such souls, a place of ennui, of chagrin, of darkness and despair." <sup>1</sup>

It behoves us to see if we can discover whether the more hopeful view, which has been growing up since the Reformation, rests upon any substantial

<sup>1</sup> *The Contemporary Review*, vol. xvii. p. 140.



basis or not. We trust to be able to show that it does, and at the same time to bring it into entire harmony with the strong belief of primitive times, that salvation was to be found only within the pale of the Catholic Church.

First, we would adduce some of the statements of Holy Scripture that seem to militate against the possibility of any class of men being handed over to ruin and perdition simply from ignorance of the appointed way of salvation. God is a Being of absolute justice. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne."<sup>1</sup> "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"<sup>2</sup>

The justice of God claims that probation should precede judgment.

It cannot be consistent with these Divine attributes to consign to the company of the devil and his angels, vast masses of men, who have never been taught the better way, who have been born and grown up and died without one ray of knowledge to lead them to God. There is then a strong presumption against their destruction. But there are other passages of Scripture that have need to be reckoned with, which seem adverse to the better hope. The present life is the only revealed time of probation; He "will render to every man according to his deeds";<sup>3</sup> "The night cometh when no man can

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxix. 14.

<sup>2</sup> GEN. xviii. 25.

<sup>3</sup> ROM. ii. 6.

work";<sup>1</sup> "There is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved";<sup>2</sup> or as the Fathers interpreted it, Christ is the Head of the Church, and there is no salvation without its pale.

We have shown before that the heathen cannot possibly be awarded the blessings of salvation on the basis of their earthly probation, if at least salvation is synonymous with the full enjoyment of the Vision of God.

Some statements of Scripture can have no application to the heathen.

The general statement, therefore, that man will be judged according to what he has done in the flesh must admit of exceptions; unless at least we would impugn the justice of God. The heathen may fairly be considered as legitimately exempted from the rule. It is right and fair to regard Revelation as addressed only to those who are capable of receiving it; and it is not a little remarkable how little is said about the heathen in the Bible, considering what a large proportion they form of the human race. The late Dr. Arnold laid down the principle very convincingly, when he said, "I hold it to be a most certain rule of interpreting Scripture that it never speaks *of* persons when there is a physical impossibility of its speaking *to* them.

<sup>1</sup> S. JOHN ix. 4.

<sup>2</sup> ACTS iv. 12.

. . . So the heathen, who died before the word was spoken, and in whose land it was never preached, are dead to the word; it concerns them not at all; but the moment it can reach them, it is theirs and for them." <sup>1</sup>

We conclude therefore that there will be some other sphere of probation for the heathen than that in the body in this present world.

Again, so far from having been admitted into the Church, which is the only gate to eternal life, they lived and died without ever, it may be, having heard of its existence. We shall find, we believe, the only solution to these perplexing difficulties through the vast possibilities of the Intermediate State.

The vast possibilities of the Intermediate State.

By way of preface to the conclusion at which we have arrived, it will be well to fortify ourselves beforehand by a few sentences and opinions drawn from some of the profoundest theological thinkers, which seem to open up potentialities of influence of almost illimitable extent. The learned Annotator of the *Analogy of Religion* has pointed out that the great Bishop Butler, when dealing with the general redemption, was so careful to avoid restricting the sphere of its operation, that we are forced to conclude that he considered it available for those

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Correspondence*, Lett. lxxv. . . .

who had not been made acquainted with it in their present life.<sup>1</sup> But this is only an inference. Two theologians on the Continent, who have won the confidence of scholars respectively by their remarkable treatises on "The Doctrine of the Person of Christ," and "The Christian Doctrine of Sin," speak very clearly; and what they say is full of suggestiveness on the subject before us. Dorner writes on the Intermediate State that "The absoluteness of Christianity demands that no one be judged before Christianity has been made accessible and brought home to him."<sup>2</sup> But this is not the case in this life with millions of human beings.

Julius Müller, who deserves hardly less of us for the greatness of his research and depth of thought, says, "The way of return to God is closed against no one who does not close it against himself; therefore, those who have not yet closed it against themselves, in that the means of salvation, the Redemption of Christ, has not yet been offered to them, will indisputably hereafter, when beyond the limits of this earthly life, be placed in a condition to enter upon this way of return to God if they choose."<sup>3</sup>

But how are the heathen to be brought to the

<sup>1</sup> *Anal.* ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *System of Christ. Doctr.* iv. 409.

<sup>3</sup> CLARK'S *For. Theol. Library*, vol. ii. p. 483.

knowledge of God, and in what sphere will their probation be passed? We cannot doubt that the offer of salvation in and through the Name of Jesus Christ will be made to them in the Intermediate State.<sup>1</sup> The true Scriptural view of that state satisfies us that the Church is there as well as here, and in the Invisible Church there are agencies no less efficient or active than in the Visible. It is the seat of Christ's mediatorial kingdom; it is not till the day of judgment that He will deliver that up; and He tells us that He will send His angels to gather "out of His Kingdom" all that offend. We cannot dream of limiting that expression to the Church on earth. Now it is impossible for a kingdom to exist anywhere without a proper organisation and agents to carry on its government, and enforce its laws.

Under what influence can the heathen be converted after death?

The agencies of the Invisible Church.

Christ is equally, we are told, the Lord of the dead as of the living. Once it is expressly revealed to us that He preached the Gospel to the dead.<sup>2</sup> It is no longer possible, as we have shown above, to

<sup>1</sup> If it be said that there will be no opportunities of an Intermediate State for those of the heathen who are living at the Second Advent, the objection seems to find an answer in S. MATT. xxiv. 14, which implies that all nations of the earth will have heard the Gospel before the end comes.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. PET. iv. 6.

interpret it figuratively of the spiritually dead ; and if during the three days of His sojourn in Hades there were souls capable of receiving the Gospel Message, there must be the same now. The Holy Spirit is there to take of the things of Christ and to show them unto men. In a purely spiritual sphere He is free and unfettered, blowing where He listeth ; with nothing to impede or dissipate His influence corresponding to that which now lets and hinders every godly motion in man's heart. The angels are there with their ceaseless ministries ready to do the bidding of their Lord. And lastly, the spirits of righteous men are there, and we can well imagine that their labours for others, in bringing them to the knowledge of God, within the fold of the Invisible Church, may be one of the great means of their fuller sanctification and restoration to the Divine Image.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### Possibilities for others who have had no Probation in this Life.

THERE are other heathen besides those who dwell in lands where the light of Gospel truth has never shone. There are the vast multitudes of men and women who have lived Pagan lives in Christian lands, not from wilful resistance to proffered grace, but from simple ignorance of a better way. Paganism  
at home.

There are, alas! millions who, in addition to having received the common heritage of a sinful nature, have been cradled in vice, and brought up in the midst of wickedness, and, through no real fault of their own, have been compelled to breathe, almost every hour of their lives, an atmosphere of impurity and blasphemy that is bound to contaminate.

It would, indeed, be deplorable if we were unable to hope for no room for improvement, if not here, at least hereafter.

Here, again, we would support our hopes for

Hopes of  
future  
recovery.

future recovery by the opinion of one of the eminent Theologians whom we quoted in the previous chapter; Julius Müller:—"The same opportunity is open," he says, "to those to whom, although belonging to the outer sphere of the Christian Church, the real nature of the Gospel has nevertheless not been presented; indeed, we may venture to hope that between death and the judgment many deep misunderstandings, by which numbers are withheld from the appropriation of the truth, will be cleared away."<sup>1</sup>

The Church militant is now, thank God, as never before, straining every nerve to reach the great masses of our population, but setting aside the centuries of almost total neglect, ask any priest in charge of a town parish, say, of 20,000 souls, whether, even in this age of unequalled parochial activity and organisation, he can conscientiously say, that the choice between God and Satan has been put before them in anything like an adequate manner; ask him whether the powers that have been brought to bear upon the masses to persuade them to all that is pure and holy, that is just and true, can be compared for one instant to the forces which are constantly driving them with an overpowering

<sup>1</sup> *Ut supra*, ch. xvii.



influence to the opposite? If not, then justice demands that they should be placed in the same category with the heathen; and if not in this life, yet in the next they should have a proper trial, and at least a free choice for the acceptance or rejection of what is the highest good.

No tree will be cut down by the Great Vine-dresser simply because it has borne no fruit; its fruitlessness may have arisen from natural causes, from insufficient nutriment or inclement seasons. Before the sentence is passed, it must have, as we say, a fair chance under favourable conditions. The heathen, alike in Christian and un-Christian lands, in the eye of God, are barren trees, but it cannot be said in either case, as it was said of Israel, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"<sup>1</sup> Till those gracious influences, which God exerts, have been brought into full and complete operation, the judgment is suspended, and it will surely not be delivered in any case before this has been fulfilled.

When we look at the threats which are expressed in Holy Scripture, we find that they are not levelled against those who have not received, or have had no opportunity of receiving the Faith, but against

The threat of Scripture against the wilful and obstinate.

<sup>1</sup> ISA. v. 4.

such as have had it brought home to them, and have not kept it; against those who do not hold fast the profession of the faith without wavering, who sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth. It is for these that we are told that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."<sup>1</sup> There are a thousand reasons which may obstruct the admission of the truth into a man's heart. It may not be offered for his acceptance in an adequate manner; it may be stopped at the very door by invincible ignorance or innate incapacity and want of apprehension; or it may be placed at a disadvantage by falling upon prejudiced ears, or, as is very often the case, it is met by an inherited antagonism. Every one of these disabilities will be considered by the Infallible Judge before He passes sentence.

No little misunderstanding has arisen from the erroneous translation of one of our Lord's last sayings recorded by S. Mark.<sup>2</sup> He did not say, as the Authorised Version implies, "he that believeth not shall be damned"; but, as it has been corrected in the Revised Version, "he that disbelieveth shall be condemned," which is something widely different.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> HEB. X. 26.

<sup>2</sup> xvi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> For the significance of the change, cf. the Author's *Foot-prints of the Son of Man*, etc., lxxix.

The Athanasian Creed does but echo this same threat when it condemns—not as is so often and so fallaciously alleged—all who do not *hold* the Catholic Faith, but those who do not *keep* it. We can only keep that which we have already received; and we keep “whole and undefiled” that which has been presented to us, and put into our keeping, without any flaw or imperfection.

It is the Church’s sentence upon the sin of defection, and it has the most certain warranty of Holy Writ: “It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.”<sup>1</sup>

Or again, “it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.”<sup>2</sup> We believe then that for those who have had no fitting opportunity of knowing God’s will here on earth, the truth will be revealed in the Intermediate State, and in such a manner that they will be made capable of all the blessings of the Incarnation and

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. PET. ii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> HEB. vi. 4-6.

Redemption through admission hereafter into the Invisible Church and Kingdom of Christ.

Favourable conditions in the Intermediate State for the conversion of the heathen.

When, moreover, we think of the conditions of the other world, and especially of the absence of all those carnal temptations which are such a hindrance to every effort for the renewal of man in the image of God, we cannot but go on and say that it may be, yea it must be, easier in the spiritual sphere to yield the obedience which the Almighty Sovereign claims: the influences in favour of accepting His will more winning and powerful: the inducements to resist it proportionately weaker.

Such a suggestion will at once start some serious objections. If this be so, is it not better to leave the heathen and ignorant as they are, and trust to their being reclaimed hereafter? If we had no revelation of God's will concerning them, we could draw no other conclusion; but there is an imperative obligation laid upon the Church on earth to "preach the Gospel to every creature,"<sup>1</sup> and to dare to withhold it, on these or any other imaginable grounds of man's conception, would be an act of culpable neglect. To weigh advantages and disadvantages in a human balance, where there is a Divine command to regulate our conduct, is to claim

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<sup>1</sup> S. MARK xvi. 15.

the right of private judgment in the face of the very highest authority. What God has bidden must be best, though with our finite faculties we cannot see it.

Again, it will naturally be objected that such a theory places those who have not accepted Christianity in this life in an advantageous and unfair position. It may be so; at least it may appear so to our finite comprehension; but it only adds one more to the many perplexities which abound in the world; for it is impossible to overlook the fact that this principle of inequality is found to run through all God's dispensations. Indeed, there is such a diversity of gifts, there are such varying degrees of capacities, powers, and opportunities, that hardly any two men we meet with are placed upon an equal footing. It demands the exercise of implicit faith in the ultimate triumph of justice, and a ready acceptance of the Divine teaching, that all will be adjusted at the final reckoning, for every one will receive from the Judge a righteous award and a fitting place in the "many mansions" of His Father's House,—one over ten cities, another over five.

The principle of inequality visible everywhere.

It is only in the thought of the great possibilities of the Intermediate State for such cases as we have been considering, that we can find any adequate reply to those who confront us with the confident

The verdict  
on the  
failure of  
the Church  
premature.

verdict, that "tried by results the Church is a failure." If, as they assume, there were no other sphere for the exercise of the Church's influence besides this little earth which is visible to the eye; if the Church were bound to make good her claim to be the regenerator of mankind within a given time and in a given place, then indeed we should have cause to tremble; but everything points away from such a conclusion.

It would be every bit as unfair to judge of Christ's influence upon the world by the visible results of His three years' work in Palestine, that is, for a limited time and in a limited sphere. To the eyes of men the effects of this were utterly insignificant—one hundred and twenty<sup>1</sup> followers in the metropolis of Judæa the net result of the preaching of the Incarnate Son of God! But if we travel on beyond the period of that first Ministry, and beyond the confines of Palestine, we see that it was the beginning of that preaching which has planted the Cross in every land. Even so, what we are now witnessing throughout the world, though infinitely less than what we might have been led to expect, is but the first-fruits, a mere handful of corn, as men contemptuously regard it, yet to the eye of faith a

<sup>1</sup> ACTS i. 15.

real earnest of the great harvest, which the Divine Word has promised will assuredly be reaped, if not here, at least in a more congenial sphere, before the end shall come.

Before we presume to measure the work of the Church we must satisfy ourselves that we have before us the vision of the whole, and not merely a fragmentary part of it. We must realise, too, that that part which comes immediately under the eye of man is just that which is fettered and restricted by manifold earthly limitations, which, with all its greatness, is infinitely small; but that which is working invisibly beyond the range of mortal sight is set free from all the narrowing laws of time and space, with no worldly distractions and material encumbrances to impede its operations; and this by comparison is of immeasurable magnitude and boundless extent. It is only when the results of this vast invisible organisation shall have been revealed, that an adequate judgment can be formed of the failure or success of the Church; till then we are content to wait, in patient confidence that the voices of rebuke and blasphemy that now fill the air will be completely hushed, and that the promise that even the gates of hell should not prevail against the Church of Christ<sup>1</sup> will be fully accomplished.

<sup>1</sup> S. MATT. xvi. 18.

The realisation of the work of the Invisible Church upon the souls of those who have never had the choice between Christ's dominion or Satan's adequately offered them in this life helps us to meet the objections of the gainsayer that the Church has not fulfilled her mission, and it certainly diminishes one of our greatest difficulties that is bound up with the mystery of future retribution.

The belief that "endless punishment is incurred by the vast mass of mankind" can no longer be thrown in our teeth by those who claim to be the heralds of a wider hope.

No second  
probation  
for any one.

But it is impossible to leave such a subject as this without uttering a word of caution or protecting ourselves from misinterpretation. The theory which has been propounded above will, it may be, minister consolation to many a troubled mind; but it may at the same time, through the perversion of Satan, create hopes that are utterly unsafe, and foster a spirit of carelessness as to the absolute necessity of seizing present opportunities and turning them to the best account. We shall endeavour to show hereafter that it lends no support to the idea that a second probation may be expected if the first has failed.



## CHAPTER XIX

### A Second Probation inconsistent with Scripture.

IN the preceding chapters in accordance with the fundamental principles of justice we have claimed for every man, no matter what his condition, that before he is judged, those laws, on the observance or breach of which the judgment will be based, should be fully made known to him: also that time and opportunity be given him in which he may make his choice for obedience or disobedience by the exercise of that free-will which is his inalienable birthright. We have shown that with vast multitudes of men and women such a choice has been impossible in this life, because they have died without ever having been taught the first principles of religion, or have been so placed that practically they had no freedom to choose between good and evil.

Probation a  
necessary  
prerequisite  
for judgment.

For these and such as these God, no doubt, in His goodness will provide, before that great and

terrible day when we must all stand before the tribunal of Christ. For them the time of probation is nowhere fixed; the will of God concerning them has not been revealed; but for all those whose circumstances are such that the offer of salvation has been fully and adequately presented in this life, it is limited; and there is nothing in Holy Scripture to induce even a hope that it can ever be extended beyond the grave.

The period  
of proba-  
tion not  
unlimited.

This limitation is again and again declared, and marks God's dealings alike with nations, churches, and individuals.

Take the Jews as an illustration of nations. It would be difficult to find a clearer proof that the time of trial is limited than is supplied by our Lord's lamentation over Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> There had been a "day of visitation," in which God's lovingkindness was abundantly shown, and  
For nations. the choice of the things that belonged to her peace was put before her with all the persuasive power that prophets and divine messengers could exert; the day had even witnessed the Son of Man pleading with her in earnest and loving entreaty, but she refused to hear, and her period of probation closed. The limit of time was reached, when the offer was

<sup>1</sup> S. LUKE xix. 42-44.

withdrawn, and what might have been, was hidden for ever from her eyes.

Look again at Churches: at Ephesus,<sup>1</sup> at Thyra-<sup>For Churches.</sup>  
tira.<sup>2</sup> Opportunities and privileges were granted, and even after they had been neglected, space was given for repentance, but the time came when God's patience was exhausted; their candlestick was for ever removed, and destruction meted out to their members in righteous retribution.

It is the same with individuals. There is for all <sup>For individuals.</sup>  
alike a "day of visitation," an acceptable time; and it is limited to this present life; it is "now," it is "to-day."<sup>3</sup> It is taught with unmistakable clearness in not a few of our Lord's parables. In the <sup>The witness of Christ's</sup>  
case of the barren fig-tree the vinedresser pleaded, <sup>parables.</sup>  
it is true, for an extension of the time of trial, but everything tends to prove that it was on the ground that as yet it had not had a fair chance, being placed in disadvantageous circumstances. Before it could be said to have failed, it must be shown that proper means had been taken to make the soil productive; it had been left hard and unbroken; whereas it was a prerequisite for successful culture

<sup>1</sup> REV. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> REV. ii. 21-23.

<sup>3</sup> 2 COR. vi. 2. This only refers to those who have had their offer of salvation in this life, as has been shown in the preceding chapters.

that the land should be digged and fertilised. Let the tree have a fair trial and no pains be spared; then, if under such favourable conditions it should still disappoint their hopes, he would not ask for an indefinite extension of mercy, but let justice take its course and be no longer arrested; let the tree be inexorably cut down.

The same principle is echoed in the Parables of the Pounds<sup>1</sup> and the Talents.<sup>2</sup> The Lord gave to his servants a definite service to perform; their individual circumstances, their differing temperaments, all was carefully taken into consideration, because the fulfilment of duty may be easier in one case than another; "he gave to every man according to his several ability;" and in due time the reckoning came. And what was the sentence? He that neglected his Master's commands was offered no second opportunity; the privileges which had been granted to him were transferred to others, and he was cast "as an unprofitable servant into outer darkness."

It is the same in the Parable of the Ten Virgins;<sup>3</sup> a definite time was allowed in which they might make preparations for the coming of the Bride-

<sup>1</sup> S. LUKE xix. 12-27.

<sup>2</sup> S. MATT. xxv. 14-30.

<sup>3</sup> S. MATT. xxv. 1-12.

groom; and though it is expressly told us that those that were foolish did their utmost to make up for their neglect and procure what was lacking after the prescribed time had elapsed, there is no hint that they met with any success; and when they tried to obtain admission into the marriage-chamber, it is said with an awful significance, "the door was shut."

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews indorses this principle; "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries."<sup>1</sup> The deliberate rejection of the truth, when once it has been fully revealed, admits of no possible after-acceptance. In support, however, of what we have said before about the necessity of an adequate presentation of the truth, it is worthy of notice that the writer here uses the very word which expresses this.<sup>2</sup> In the original it is the word which S. Paul employed to describe

<sup>1</sup> HEB. x. 26, 27.

<sup>2</sup> τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας. Cf. ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην, 1 COR. xiii. 12. ἐπὶ in compounds often expresses fulness; cf. COL. ii. 2, iii. 10; EPHES. i. 17, iv. 13.

the perfect knowledge which belongs to God : no mere partial conception such as is common to man, but the full unhindered revelation which renders the rejection of it without excuse.

There is one instance revealed to us on the authority of our Blessed Lord,<sup>1</sup> to teach, it would seem, that failure in our earthly probation admits of no remedy in the Intermediate State. The description of the rich man in the parable is not always rightly interpreted, and his consignment to a place of torment in Hades has been regarded as a somewhat severe judgment. It is true that he is not held up to rebuke for positive active iniquity ; it is not said that he had gained his riches by dishonest practices, or that any open scandal was attached to his name ; but there are cases where the neglect of an obvious duty is equally reprehensible with positive crime. He had made the pleasures of self-gratification his all in all : he had spent entirely on self what God had given him to be shared by others, and not merely now and again, but he had suffered self-indulgence to be the habit of his every-day life. He had done it, moreover, deliberately, in the full consciousness that there were other claimants for a portion of the "good things" that he possessed ; for a most forcible appeal

The impossibility of retrieving the past in Hades taught by the case of the rich man.

<sup>1</sup> S. LUKE xvi. 19-31.

from one in dire distress was continually reaching his ears. It seems to be intended to aggravate the inhumanity of the rich man that his conduct is indirectly contrasted with the sympathy and kindness of the brute beasts; "the dogs came and licked his sores." Again, it is worthy of notice that he had failed in just that particular, in regard to which Christ has assured us we shall be judged hereafter. Then shall the King "say unto them on the left hand; Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungred and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; . . . Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."<sup>1</sup>

It is no mitigation, then, of his conduct that no open and manifest crime is alleged against him; he had wilfully disregarded the law of God in making self his highest good; he had broken down completely in his probation, and our Lord tells us by his example that no second opportunity after death is allowed, no possibility of undoing the past in the disembodied state. In his case it is difficult to understand how a second probation in the spirit could have been of any practical use if it had been

<sup>1</sup> S. MATT. xxv. 41-45.

granted, because his temptations had been wholly carnal, bound up from beginning to end with fleshly appetites. The conditions therefore of the trial would have been essentially different. So it is written that henceforward there was no hope of recovery; a great gulf, too deep and wide to be bridged over, must separate him in future and for ever from the reward of the righteous. For him and all who have failed as he did there is no repentance in the grave.

“Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth and falsehood, for the good or evil side:  
Some great cause, God’s new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,  
Parts the goats upon the left hand and the sheep upon the right;  
And the choice goes by for ever ’twixt that darkness and that light.”

The impossibility of recovery after the judgment has been passed.

Is there any possibility of recovery after the final judgment? It is difficult indeed to conceive how one who has failed under circumstances, where there was at least much to encourage him to do what was right, can ever succeed where all this is withdrawn, and every influence for evil is intensified to the highest point. Yet it has been asserted that after a



time of punishment in the presence of the devil and his angels, the souls of the wicked will be changed and their hearts brought, in spite of the awful surroundings, to love not evil but good. It is directly opposed to all human experience, which teaches that exposure to demoralising influences in those who are already depraved inevitably produces further depravity. When once the sentence has been delivered, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," it would be a reversal of every known law of life to expect any amelioration of character. To one that is cut off from the source of all good, and abandoned entirely to evil in its direst form, nothing less than a miracle can avert the consequence of an ever-increasing and at last incorrigible depravity.

If we might dare to draw an argument from analogy, we should find a striking confirmation of the principle in the history of one of our penal settlements. At one time it was the custom to transport from Norfolk Island into a place of severer punishment all those criminals who had proceeded to transgress the laws in spite of what they had undergone. Undeterred by the heaviest sentence they sinned afresh when opportunity offered, and they were banished still further from their fellows

as irreclaimable sinners ; but the condition of this second place of transportation, with no one redeeming feature, with nothing but double-dyed, unmitigated sin on every side, became so unspeakably awful, that through simple dread of some unparalleled outbreak of wickedness, the practice was abandoned. But the history of those few short years remains, and we are justified in reading it as a fearful presage of the misery of those lost souls which shall be shut out at the Judgment from the presence of all that is good, and consigned to the un hindered influence of the powers of evil.<sup>1</sup>

It has been suggested that punishment will effect the remedy ; “ Does not,” it has been frequently asked, “ æonian fire purify ? ”<sup>2</sup> But there is one kind of punishment which is corrective and another which is retributive ;<sup>3</sup> and the latter is distinctly threatened against the determined sinner : “ of how much sorer punishment ” (τιμωρίας) “ suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden

<sup>1</sup> Cf. WOODFORD, *Sermons on New Testament*, ii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ARCHDEACON FARRAR, *Eternal Hope*.

<sup>3</sup> The only Greek word which necessarily implies correction is παιδεία, which is used (either the noun or verb) nineteen times in the New Testament, but never once to express the final judgment of God on sinners, nor, indeed, of the future punishment at all. Κόλασις, which is used twice (S Matt. xxv. 46, and κολαζομένους, 2 S. Peter ii. 9) of the

under foot the Son of God? . . . For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord." <sup>1</sup>

It is told us in the Revelation with startling significance that when the angels poured out their vials full of the wrath of God, it was followed by no cry of penitence or confession of sin, but that "they blasphemed the Name of God . . . and they repented not to give Him glory," and again, as "they gnawed their tongues for pain," they "blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."<sup>2</sup>

This, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter ; a righteous judgment presupposes of necessity an adequate probation ; if this has been withheld from any man in this life, through circumstances over which he had no control, an extension of time may be granted after death ; but wherever the choice of good has been fully offered and with such force and persuasion that a man might reasonably be expected to

The conclusion from Scripture, that where the probation has been adequate it is not renewed.

future punishment of the wicked, might, according to classical usage, imply correction, but in the LXX., the Apocrypha, and the other passages of the New Testament, it indicates punishment pure and simple. There is no instance where it is used of punishment inflicted with a view to moral improvement. *τιμωρα*, which is applied to the wicked, certainly conveys no such idea.

<sup>1</sup> HEB. x. 29, 30.

<sup>2</sup> REV. xvi. 9-11.

take it, if he should resist the grace of God and, trampling His offer under foot, accept the evil, the consequences are eternal. No new test, no opportunity of retrieving the past, no second probation is possible : the door of repentance has been closed against him.

There is, however, one ray of consolation in the midst of so much that is dark and overwhelming. No human being can tell exactly what constitutes an adequate presentment of the truth to any man ; God alone will be the Judge of that. Of every one's work, his opportunity, his capacity of choice, the day of judgment will declare what sort it is. Till that is revealed, therefore, the number of the saved or lost must remain among those "secret things which are the Lord's"; and it is a daring presumption to say that "the doom of destruction awaits the vast mass of mankind."

## CHAPTER XX.

### The Legitimacy of praying for the Dead.

ONE of the most interesting questions in connection with the Intermediate State is the legitimacy of prayer for the faithful souls that have entered upon it. We have investigated the evidence and set it forth at length in another treatise,<sup>1</sup> but it seems impossible to pass it by at the present time, and this seems the most fitting place to deal with it inasmuch as it is intimately bound up with the concluding subject, the Communion of Saints.

Without entering into details we refer the reader to four epochs of history, the consideration of which will best reveal the mind of the Church ; they are, the time of our Blessed Lord and the Apostles : the period commonly spoken of as Primitive Christianity, extending from the Apostolic age down to the fourth General Council in the middle of the fifth

The evidence of important epochs of Church history.

<sup>1</sup> This is done in *After Death*, Pt. I.

century: the eventful crisis of the English Reformation: and finally, the last two hundred years.

Concerning the belief which prevailed at the first epoch very little is told us in Holy Scripture, but there is historical evidence to be drawn from other sources to show that it was then a common practice among the Jews to pray for the dead. The Second Book of Maccabees, composed probably about 124 B.C., witnesses to a definite instance in which the practice was enforced, and states the grounds whereupon it rested.<sup>1</sup>

The time of  
our Lord.

The Jewish Service-books<sup>2</sup> corroborate it, and though it is difficult to fix the dates of these, it is universally acknowledged that they embody doctrines and practices of the most remote antiquity. Indirect evidence has also been found by Jewish writers both in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>3</sup> Now our Blessed Lord does not seem to have spoken upon the subject. How are we to account for His silence? We should hesitate to lay it down dogmatically that it indicates

<sup>1</sup> xii. 44, 45.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kaddish and Haskarath Neshamoth. Hebrew tomb stones teach the same.

<sup>3</sup> Siphre on 4th and 5th Books of Moses. DEUT. xxi. 8. The late Hebrew and Talmudic Reader at Cambridge, one of the most learned Jews of modern times, never hesitated to declare his undoubted conviction that the practice was common in the time of our Lord; and there was nothing to prejudice his judgment in the matter.

His approval of a practice of which He was fully conscious, yet we are justified in saying that it is the most probable solution of the difficulty.

Passing to the period that immediately followed, we open a page of the greatest importance in its bearing upon the subject; for one of the Apostles is found to use language which the unbiassed interpreter cannot fail to understand as a prayer for the dead. In speaking of Onesiphorus he said, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day."<sup>1</sup> True, it is not written in so many words that Onesiphorus was dead, but a fair consideration of the manner in which S. Paul speaks of him and his household shows it to be the only natural conclusion to be drawn; and such was the almost unanimous verdict of the early Fathers of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

The Apostolic age.

In the second stage of history before us, we find overwhelming testimony. The monumental tablets taken from the Catacombs, dating from the close of the first to the beginning of the fifth centuries, give abundant illustrations; over and over again they speak of the faithful dead as being in peace, but

The Primitive Church.

<sup>1</sup> 2 TIM. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> S. Chrysostom speaks doubtfully. Fabricius, the Biographer of Leipsic in the last century, has asserted that he was alive, but adduces no evidence.

express prayers and petitions that they may enjoy it more abundantly.

The teaching of the Fathers is uniform and presents a chain of evidence which reaches from the close of the second century onwards; it does not fill up the gap of more than a hundred years between S. Paul and Tertullian, but we are constrained to believe that this is done by the primitive Liturgies. The opponents of the doctrine of prayers for the dead urge that this latter source of information is not to be trusted, because the Liturgies are full of late interpolations. But though it is perfectly true that they do abound in interpolated matter, it in no way diminishes the value of their testimony when it comes to be tested critically. Liturgical scholars are able to put their finger at once upon any part and decide whether it is original or interpolated. Now it is a principle regulating the whole character of Public Worship that no doctrine or practice ever finds its way into the Service-books until it has laid hold upon, and become deeply lodged, in the hearts of the people; it is obvious, therefore, that the recognition of prayers for the dead in the Liturgies of the second century carries the evidence for the practice still further back.



Between the second and third epochs there is a long interval of time, during which many corruptions crept into the Church, and not least in regard to this and its associated doctrines. At the Re-formation, in that Revision of our Service-books which, as the work entirely of English Catholics, has been favourably received, unauthorised accretions were removed, and the prayers were once more clothed in primitive and Apostolic language. Then came the disastrous time when foreign Reformers were allowed to interfere with our English worship. It is generally taught that they swept away all traces of the practice, and that as it has never been authoritatively restored, it cannot be adopted in loyalty to the Reformed Church. That they obscured it none can doubt: but that they prohibited it, is wholly untrue. The Preface to our present Prayer-book asserts that "the main body and essentials" of our Service-books have continued through all the Revisions "the same unto this day." There is moreover very distinct evidence that the Church refused to accept the condemnation of prayers for the dead just at that epoch when so much was done or attempted, to lower the standard of Catholic doctrine.

The period  
of the Re-  
formation.

In 1553 A.D. a body of Forty-two Articles was

agreed upon by the Bishops and other representative men in the Church "for the avoiding of controversy in opinions and the establishment of godly concord in certain matters of religion." Among these was one, the 23d, which condemned "the Schoolauthors' teaching concerning Purgatory, Pardons, worshipping, and adoration as well of images as of relics . . . as a fond thing vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God." It is by no means generally known that in the earliest draft of this Article, "Prayer for the dead" was placed in the same category with the above; it is even said that the Article with this addition was actually signed by the six Royal Chaplains.<sup>1</sup> Moreover Hooper, whose views were almost identical with the most anti-Catholic of the foreign Protestants, took upon himself to circulate the Article in this form throughout his diocese in the year 1552 A.D.<sup>2</sup> When, however, the Forty-two Articles were submitted for final approval to Convocation this particular clause

<sup>1</sup> Todd, in his *Cranmer* ii. 288, mentions this; and the copy so signed is in the State-paper Office. Cf. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*, 1547-1580.

<sup>2</sup> Hooper seems in his visitation to have added to the original number, for he issued fifty. In the 9th of these, after Purgatory and pardons, was added "prayer for them that are departed out of this world."

in the 23d was deliberately erased. It shows as clearly as possible that the matter was brought under consideration, and that, even at a crisis when the authorities of the English Church manifested more disregard for Catholic principles than perhaps at any other time, they nevertheless found it quite impossible to stigmatise prayers for the dead as contrary to Scripture.

At the final Revision of the Prayer-book, the supposed connexion of praying for the dead with Purgatory was still so strongly ingrained in the popular mind that the Revisers on grounds of expediency hesitated to restore the definite forms which had been withdrawn at the second Revision. It is satisfactory, however, to know that the leading spirit of the Church in this work, Bishop Cosin, has left it on record that the words, "that we and *all Thy whole Church* may have remission of sins, and all other benefits of Thy Passion" were retained in the Service of set purpose as a cumulative expression intended to include both the living and the dead.<sup>1</sup>

Passing to the time that has intervened since the last act of the Reformation period, we find that, notwithstanding the discouragements excited by fears of Roman error, which robbed our Public Services

The period that has elapsed since the Reformation.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Notes*, 1st series. *Works*, v. 351-2: Anglo-Cath. Libr.

of all definite teaching on the subject, there is ample testimony in the lives of many of our greatest Bishops and divines<sup>1</sup> to show that in private practice this heritage of Catholic antiquity was never sacrificed.

The conclusion forced upon us by a long and patient investigation is, that it would be difficult to find stronger or more uniform support for any doctrine or practice not resting upon the express direction of our Lord or His Apostles.

<sup>1</sup> Barrow, Thorndike, Ken, Hickes, John Wesley, and Heber may be mentioned as examples.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### Popular Objections to the Practice.

**B**EFORE we leave this subject it will be useful to consider some of the chief objections which have been raised against our acceptance of the doctrine. It is often alleged as a practical hindrance that it is so bound up with the Roman Purgatory that to accept the one is to admit the other; "Purgatory is a consequent to the doctrine of prayers for the dead." It is true that Roman Catholic divines, failing altogether to find early testimony of a direct kind, have appealed to the ancient custom of praying for the dead, in proof of their special tenets on the Intermediate State, and assume that "whenever the holy Fathers speak of prayer for the dead, they conclude for Purgatory." Such an appeal, however, ought to be entirely disallowed, on the ground that the prayers of the early Church were offered for saints whom Roman Catholics believe to have been exempted altogether from the pains of Purgatory. For instance, in the primitive Liturgies, the

The supposed necessary connexion between Purgatory and Prayers for the dead.

Apostles, Martyrs, and even the Blessed Virgin are prayed for,<sup>1</sup> although it is an article of the Roman Faith that they passed at death directly to heaven, having no need to undergo any further purification in an Intermediate State. S. Augustine gathers up in a pregnant sentence the principle which guided the early Church, and it is distinctly antagonistic to the Roman claims: "Who is he for whom no man prays, but only He Who intercedes for all men?"<sup>2</sup> The practice therefore of antiquity, so far from supporting Purgatory in its late and unauthorised sense, may be fitly employed as a reason for rejecting it. There is certainly no such connexion between the two doctrines as is feared on the one hand and asserted on the other.

The alleged  
insuffi-  
ciency of  
Scriptural  
authority.

Another objection that has often been pressed is the apparent weakness of the Scriptural sanction—one brief sentence, and that, it is said, of doubtful interpretation. It seems not unreasonable to reply that if the case of Onesiphorus be granted, as an unbiassed criticism demands that it should be, for the whole drift of the passage shows that he was dead, then the principle has the very highest autho-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Litt. Clem., S. Basil, S. Cyril.*

<sup>2</sup> Quis est autem pro quo nullus orat, nisi ille qui pro omnibus interpellat? *In Psal'm xxxvi. Serm. ii. § 20.*

riety. The prayer was written, like the rest of Scripture, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and whether it found expression twenty times or only once, it is equally in accordance with the Mind of Him Who was sent to the Apostles to guide them into all truth. But if the presence of the least uncertainty as to whether he was alive or dead creates in any mind such a difficulty, that the authority of the passage must be rejected, we have surely all that is needed in the unanimous reception of the practice by the primitive Church. For any doctrine that is necessary to salvation we demand the clear and explicit teaching of God's Word; but for what is only accounted a pious belief or practice, albeit of surpassing value, the authority of the primitive and undivided Church is amply sufficient.

If it be asserted, as is sometimes done, that Scripture alone is to be the guide of all our practice, and that we have no right to commend for observance anything which cannot definitely claim the *litera scripta* of God's Word in its favour, we feel bound to point out, that much as it is to be wished that we had such an infallible guide, yet some of the most essential characteristics of the Church's life have been formed without it. Let us take a single illustration. Upon what authority do we base the

The impossibility of setting up Scripture as the sole standard in doctrines and practices not *de fide*.

observance of the First day of the week instead of the Seventh? When we reflect what strict and rigid rules, what minute directions, were given by God Himself to regulate men's conduct on the Sabbath-day, we are able to form some idea of the vastness of the revolution, which has so changed men's minds that they never think of the seventh as in any sense a holy day. Now how do we know that this change was agreeable to the Mind of God? There is not a single text of Scripture which can satisfy us upon the point. We have no doubt that the observance of Sunday and the complete supersession of the Sabbath-day rest ultimately upon the authority of Christ, but we can only learn it from the action of the primitive Church. We are told that during the forty days that followed the Resurrection Christ spoke to the Apostles "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,"<sup>1</sup> that is, as S. Matthew clearly shows,<sup>2</sup> the Church of Christ. It is quite impossible that the ecclesiastical rulers in those first centuries could ever have overthrown the sanctity of one day in favour of another without convincing proof that the Apostles had received Christ's

The Church the sole authority for the observance of Sunday.

<sup>1</sup> ACTS i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matthew's aim throughout his Gospel was to set forth the Royalty of Christ, and to exhibit the Church as His kingdom.



directions to do it; but we are not told it anywhere in the Books that have come down to us.

Even so it is impossible to believe that the custom of praying for the dead in primitive times could have found so large a place in the Public Worship of the Universal Church, and in the private practice of individual Christians, unless those who adopted it had an undoubted conviction that it rested on the sanction of Christ, traditionally conveyed to themselves through those who heard it from His Own lips. If we accept Church authority in the one case, it is inconsistent to reject it in the other; and it is worthy of notice that the weight of authority is less for the supersession of the Sabbath than it is for the legitimacy of praying for the dead. There was a divided use as to the former for a time at least,<sup>1</sup> but an absolutely unanimous acceptance of the latter from the very first. We cannot but feel, therefore, that it is no derogation from the sovereign authority

<sup>1</sup> This is brought out most markedly in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, in which the Lord's Day and the Sabbath are regarded nearly as co-ordinate: the Christians were exhorted to meet for praise "principally on the Sabbath-day," and "more diligently on the day of the Lord's resurrection," ii. lix. Again, "keep the Sabbath and the Lord's day festival," vii. xxiii.; cf. also vii. xxxvi. and viii. xxxiii. Gregory of Nyssa speaks of them as "sister-days," and Socrates says that there were solemn assemblies on both (*Eccl. Hist.* vi. 8).

of God's Word to accept the subordinate teaching of the Church in a matter which is not binding as "of faith," but worthy to be received for the hope and comfort it is able to inspire.

Is it lawful  
to pray for  
those who  
seem to  
have died  
in sin?

There is yet one more point of interest that can hardly be passed over: for whom is it lawful to pray? for those only who died in faith, or for sinners also? If for the former alone, it has been not unnaturally objected that prayer for the dead is robbed of its chief attraction. In primitive times in Public Worship none but "the faithful" were accounted as eligible for the prayers of the Church; at times they were spoken of or regarded as "sinners," but never as "wilful sinners." For instance, pardon was asked for what we should call sins of infirmity; "forgive their faults and failings" . . . "blot out all their prævarications;" "call not back their foolish deeds, for there is no one in the bonds of the flesh who is innocent in Thy sight."<sup>1</sup>

Again, prayers were offered for the effacement of the defiling touch which sin had left upon the soul: "we pray Thee, that whatever stain he has contracted in his passage through the world may be wiped out,"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Litt. S. Joannis Evang.*; *Minor. S. Jacobi*; *S. Dionysii*; RENAUD.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacr. Leon.*; *Sacr. Gelas.* MURAT.

but there is hardly any mention in the Liturgies of those who died in open transgression. This is just what we should have expected, in the knowledge of what Holy Scripture reveals, that the destiny of those who have deliberately rejected Christ and His offer of salvation is fixed at death.

We can, however, readily draw some distinction between the action of the Church in her public Services and that of individuals in private. In the early Church, when discipline was enforced, there was little difficulty in deciding who were qualified for her prayers; they were all who died in communion, who had not severed themselves or been severed by judicial sentence from her rights and privileges. The Church claimed to decide, as far at least as she was called upon to form a judgment, who died in wilful unrepentant sin, and from those who were cut off from communion in life she withheld her prayers after death. But whatever the Church, by a right, solemnly delegated to her by her Lord, may claim to do, no such authority belongs to individuals. We know not what may pass between the soul of the transgressor and God even at the last, and in the absence of certainty which is unattainable by our finite capacity, and in the exercise of that charity which "hopeth all

Distinction  
between  
public and  
private  
prayers.

things," we may well shrink from condemning though we may fear the worst. If then we would pray for any of whose penitence we may have no assurance, it behoves us to accompany our petition with a recognition of the necessary condition, "if it be in accordance with Thy will." With such a safeguard as this against even seeming to traverse God's judgment upon a sinful life, we may find comfort in praying for sinners, when all other means of helping them are taken away. The same suggestion may help us, as it helped the pious Bishop Heber, if we cannot satisfy ourselves that we have Divine sanction for praying for those that have died in faith; we should ask God's forgiveness if unknowingly we have overstepped the boundary of what is right in His eyes.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### The Communion of Saints.

AS an Article of Belief this doctrine has a history in many respects almost identical with that of the Descent into Hell. It is probably the latest addition to the Apostles' Creed,<sup>1</sup> occurring for the first time in a sermon attributed to Eusebius Gallus,<sup>2</sup> in which a creed is quoted with the words "Communion of Saints" immediately after "the Holy Catholic Church." The authorship, however, of the sermon is a matter of uncertainty, some critics assigning it to Faustus the Breton,<sup>3</sup> who died

As an Article of Belief the last admitted into the Apostles' Creed.

<sup>1</sup> It was not in the Aquileian Creed, expounded by Rufinus, or mentioned by him in the Oriental or the Roman Creed; not in the African, nor in the Sermons of Chrysologus, nor the *de symbolo ad Catechumenos* of S. Augustine, nor in the 119th sermon *de tempore*, c. 8. It was not in the old Greek Creeds, not cited at the Councils of Nice or Constantinople or Ephesus, nor commented upon by S. Cyril and S. Chrysostom. Cf. Pearson's *Expos.*; note *in loco*.

<sup>2</sup> DR. HEURTLEY, *de Fide et Symbolo*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Commonly called *Rhegiensis*, from Riez, the name of his see in the province of Aix. Dr. Gaspari, following Oudin, has written a learned treatise in favour of his authorship.

at the close of the fifth century, others again with greater probability to an unknown writer of the century following. It is in favour of the later date that it is found in no other Creed till 650 A.D., when it occurs in that recited in the Gallican Sacramentary.<sup>1</sup>

It is worthy of notice that the doctrine must have been regarded as one of no little importance, for the Church to have altered her symbol of belief for its admission at a time when additions had ceased to be made.

Such being a brief summary of its imposition as an Article of Faith, we turn to the consideration of its true significance.

Now there is unquestionably a sense in which the words may be interpreted as having no reference to the state after death, which is the subject of our present inquiry; and we feel bound to dwell upon it, though we are fully satisfied that the gravest objections lie against any such limitation. It will all turn of course upon the meaning of the terms "Saints" and "Communion." Judged by modern usage, the former is appropriated to those who have finished their course and gained an

Applicable  
to the  
Saints on  
earth, but  
not re-  
stricted to  
them.

<sup>1</sup> MABILLON, *Museum Italicum*, i. pt. 2, p. 312, and *de Lit. Gallic.* p. 339.

entrance into Paradise ; but originally it was by no means restricted to the faithful dead. In Holy Scripture the title was applied not only to those who led holy lives, but to any who were conditionally holy by virtue of their dedication to God.

Scriptural  
usage of  
the term  
"Saints."

In the Old Testament all Israelites admitted into covenant with God by circumcision were holy, and together they formed what the Psalmist called "an assembly or congregation of saints";<sup>1</sup> and God Himself employed the same expression in reference to the whole people, when He said, that they should be to Him "a kingdom of priests, an holy nation."<sup>2</sup> The fundamental idea of the word is separation,<sup>3</sup> or dedication to God's service. No doubt the thought of such consecration suggested personal separation from the defilements of the world, and as this thought became intensified the word acquired, as in modern usage, a wholly moral significance ; but the fact that it was not considered inapplicable to a sinful and rebellious people shows that it was not always so restricted.

The original usage of the word in the New Testament is analogous to that in the Old, designating those who by baptism had been brought into

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxix. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> EXOD. xix. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Trench, *Synonyms*, 2d ser. p. 168.

union with God. Saints and Christians are synonymous terms; and S. Paul does not hesitate to address the whole body of his converts in any particular Church by the general title of "saints,"<sup>1</sup> though he goes on in the letter to reprove them for the commission of most grievous sins.<sup>2</sup>

Primarily, then, as far as the persons are concerned, the communion of saints may have indicated nothing more than a close relationship existing between the living members of Christ's Church. But the question arises whether "communion" is applicable in Churches where dissensions and divergent opinions and practices are known to have existed. The union of Churches or members of a Church may be regarded as either objective or subjective. In the ideal state it is both. It is objective by reason of the "One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism."<sup>3</sup> All are members of the one Body, of which there is One Head, and One in-breathing quickening Spirit; and, no matter how divergent their practice, so long as they hold to these fundamental truths there is an indissoluble bond of union between them. The Eastern and

The double  
sense of  
Church  
Communion.

<sup>1</sup> EP. TO ROM. i. 7, xvi. 15; 1 COR. i. 2; EPHES. i. 1; PHIL. i. 1; COL. i. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 COR. iii. 1-3; vi. 15-18.

<sup>3</sup> EPHES. iv. 5.



Western Churches are both "in Christ" as every branch is in the Vine, in both cases drawing their vital principle from one and the same source of life.

This union may be expressed or symbolised outwardly and visibly by definite "acts of communion" which are very helpful in realising it; but the interruption or deliberate refusal on one side or the other does not break the bond. It destroys subjective unity, but objectively nothing can destroy it but the absolute rejection of that belief on which the Church is founded. Externally there may be strife and discord, but underlying all the visible and distracting confusion there is that peace which nothing can take away, resting on the eternal truth that there can be no schism in the Body of Christ. It is as when we look at the sea in the midst of a storm; its surface is agitated and driven by the force of the wind in every direction, wave dashing against wave in angry conflict; but we are sure all the time that, if we were to penetrate to its depths, we should find the great tides flowing on below as calm and undisturbed as though no storm were raging overhead.

The existing divisions, therefore, of Churches and individuals present no real difficulty in supposing

Communion not necessarily destroyed by overt acts of dissension.

that this Article of our Creed is limited to that bond of union which exists between all the members of the Visible Church.

Reasons for extending the idea of communion beyond earthly relationships.

There are, however, abundant reasons for extending the existence of this communion beyond the sphere of the Church militant here on earth, so as to embrace the Church expectant now in Paradise. There is first the *a priori* consideration arising from the fact that the doctrine is set forth not as an historic fact admitting of demonstrative proof, but as something to be received in faith—as an Article of Belief. Yet further, all its surroundings are suggestive of mystery ; it has its place in that division of the Creed which exhibits the Ministry of the Holy Ghost. No doubt there are clouds and darkness surrounding all the acts of Deity, whether of God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost ; but we know far less of the Third Person than of the First and the Second, and the clouds seem to thicken around us as we enter upon His sphere of operation.

The mystery underlying all the Articles associated with it.

Take the Catholic Church which is offered for the acceptance of our faith, as the firstfruits of the work of the Holy Ghost. If it were only a visible organisation with an earthly ministry and a congregation of human beings no matter how vast, with magnificent

buildings and much pomp and circumstance of Ritual and Worship, witnessing palpably to its greatness, we should not expect to find the acknowledgment of it made an Article of Belief; the senses could take cognisance of it as an accredited fact. It is because it is infinitely more than the eye can see or the ear take in; because from its divine origin and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost it contains a supernatural element, which transcends the grasp of every earthly sense; it is for this that it calls for the exercise of our faith. Look at its Sacraments; if Baptism were nothing more than a sign of profession or token of membership; or if the Holy Eucharist were but an ordinance instituted to quicken men's remembrance of Christ's Death, they would make little demand on our faith for acceptance; but all is changed directly we are told that in the one, by the operation of the Holy Ghost waiting upon and sanctifying the Baptism of water to the mystical washing away of sin, the soul of the baptized is brought into living union with God, and made a partaker of the Divine Nature; and that in the other, by the selfsame Agency co-operating with Christ's commissioned Ministry, His very Life is communicated to the faithful, and the union begun in Baptism is sustained and strengthened, then at

once we pass out of the region of the senses, and are thrown entirely upon the principle of faith.

It is the same with all the other clauses in this part of the Creed: the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. I believe "in the forgiveness of sins;" it is not the historic fact alone that Christ died upon the Cross as a sacrifice for men's sins, that He was "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," but it carries with it the acceptance of the inconceivably awful delegation of the Divine right of forgiveness, by which the ministry of reconciliation was intrusted to mortal men, when on the evening of the Resurrection the Lord breathed on the Apostles, and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."<sup>1</sup> Human reason would shrink from accepting it, because to our finite intelligence it seems to infringe an inalienable prerogative of God; but we know that in spiritual matters, where sight fails faith steps in, and so the assurance of present forgiveness, conveyed through human channels, is presented to us to be received in faith as an integral portion of the Christian system.

<sup>1</sup> S. JOHN XX. 22, 23.

The same might be repeated of the other Articles, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting; they transcend all human experience: they are mysteries of the Faith. When, then, we find the Communion of the Saints attributed to the Third Person of the Trinity, and co-ordinated with other works of His, all of which are wrapt in mystery, we are driven to the conclusion that no thoughts can satisfy the requirements of the position, unless they carry us beyond that which the eye can see or the reason grasp; unless, in short, they suggest that there is in the members of Christ's Church, through the unbroken operation of His indwelling Spirit in the one Body, such a close relationship that even death is powerless to separate them.

Conclusion  
that it must  
embrace  
the dead in  
Christ as  
well as the  
living.

The first intimation that such a link would be established between the two worlds through the Incarnation is found in Christ's promise to Nathanael that hereafter, when, that is, the Holy Spirit should inspire the Church, which He was then framing, with the Divine life, the Apostle would realise what Jacob had seen in vision, a ladder of communication between earth and heaven, "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."<sup>1</sup> Christ, the Head, cannot be separated from His Body, which

<sup>1</sup> S. JOHN i. 51.

is the Church; hence there must be a bond of union between the faithful dead and the faithful living, the one no less than the other being members incorporate in the same.

Then the Apostles caught up the idea and pressed it home on their converts. S. Paul reminds the Philippians that their "conversation," their citizenship, "is in heaven";<sup>1</sup> and repeating the figure he tells the Ephesians that they are "fellow-citizens with the saints."<sup>2</sup> The language is full of significance; it suggests at once the idea of duties and functions to perform,<sup>3</sup> as well as privileges to enjoy in their relationship to the other world, and it is very distinct in the assertion that they have already entered upon them. It is no future inheritance of responsibility or enjoyment to which they will succeed hereafter; it is a great and present reality, and an assured possession.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PHIL. iii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> EPHES. ii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Civis supernæ Hierusalem: noster, inquit, municipatus in cœlis.—TERT. *de Cor. Mil.* 13. Vobis corona æternitatis, trabium angelicæ substantiæ, politia in cœlis.—Id. *ad Martyr.* 3. So Polycarp, writing to the Philippians, promises them their reward if they perform their duties as citizens, ἐὰν πολιτευσώμεθα ἀξίως αὐτοῦ καὶ συμβασιλεύσομεν αὐτῷ, sec. 5.

<sup>4</sup> πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει: he does not say ἐστὶ, but the stronger term ὑπάρχει, implying prior existence: they have it before they get there; cf. Phil. ii. 6, where it expresses the prior existence of Christ in the form of God.

Again, the same Apostle assures them that, by virtue of their conversion to Christianity, God "hath raised" them "up together, and made" them "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup> It was because through their Baptism they had been incorporated into Christ, "members of His Body, of His flesh, of His bones," that onward from the time that this mystical union was formed, where He was, there also they were.

The most striking passage, however, in its bearing on the Communion of Saints occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the inspired author tells the Jewish converts that they have entered into fellowship with the members of the Divine Commonwealth: "We are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, . . . and to the spirits of just men made perfect."<sup>2</sup> All this, coming to us, as it does, on the highest authority, carries conviction to the mind that between the living and the dead in Christ there is a vital bond of union and joint participation of privilege and responsibility.

If we compare the whole Church, as we have seen it somewhere compared, to one long army on

<sup>1</sup> EPHES. ii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> HEB. xii. 22, 23.

its march towards heaven, we shall be able to realise, though still very inadequately, how a veritable communion can exist between the different parts, though they may be prevented from holding actual converse with each other. They have the consciousness that they all serve under one Captain, bound to Him by the same oath of allegiance, the Baptismal vow ; all wearing the same uniform, the white robes of Christ's righteousness : all carrying the same standard, which is His Cross : all pursuing the same aim, the complete <sup>1</sup> conquest over sin, and all inspired by the hope of the same reward, even the Crown of life. The leading columns of the vast host are far advanced on their way ; it may be some few have actually entered the heavenly city,<sup>2</sup> others have disappeared from the earthly horizon, and are crossing the valley beyond at divers degrees of progress and advancement, others again are still only beginning the heavenward march ; but through all the lengthened procession there is a real sense of communion, they that are furthest on conscious of those behind,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, ch. vii., on Purification after Death.

<sup>2</sup> If, that is, the Martyrs are already enjoying the Beatific Vision, as the Roman Church teaches. The doctrine was put forth at the Council of Florence 1439 A.D., and again at Trent, when it was made an Article of Faith. In *After Death*, part II. ch. vii., this view has been examined by the light of Patristic evidence, and disallowed.



those that linger with the last sensible of being drawn forwards by a mysterious attraction from those in front ; and so, though some are constantly passing out of sight, and no voice comes back to tell us either where they are or what they are doing, the bond is never broken, the unity is still intact.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### Specific Ways in which Communion may be realised.

THE Communion of Saints can hardly rest upon a passive consciousness of unity ; for though there is no certain knowledge of it, we feel instinctively that it cannot be fully satisfied without some active fellowship in kindred aims and reciprocal service, especially in a common hope and faith and praise of God, and in united acts of prayer—theirs for us and ours for them.

Common  
hope.

Hope is a very watchword of the Church on earth. The Apostles impressed upon their converts the value of it as their stay and comfort in their earthly pilgrimage ; and calls to abound in hope, to rejoice in hope, to lay hold with it as an anchor of the soul, to have the full assurance of it, are constantly recurring notes of S. Paul's Epistles ; and when he is describing the former condition of those whom he had won to Christ, he sums up the greatest misery

of it by characterising them as "having no hope, and without God in the world."<sup>1</sup>

It must be also a watchword of the saints in Paradise, for this is emphatically a place of waiting and expectation; one in which their hopes are quickened by realising that the trials and discouragements incidental to their former probation are over. To be "with Christ" and in the company of angels cannot but raise their hopes to the highest pitch in expectation of the ever-nearing consummation of all bliss, the Beatific Vision. It is revealed<sup>2</sup> to us that some, secure in the peace and shelter of the Altar of God, were heard to cry in passionate longing for the time to come when sin should be avenged; and the Book of Inspiration closes with the declaration that the Church Universal, the whole Mystical Body, which forms the Bride of Christ, and the indwelling Spirit, unite in the language of hope, and long for the Advent which shall fulfil all their desire; "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come."<sup>3</sup>

Again, faith is a very condition of our spiritual being. In this life, it is true, it is liable to fluctuations; it is shaken and staggered by perplexing anomalies, as God's promises appear to be failing,

Common  
faith.

<sup>1</sup> EPHES. ii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> REV. vi. 10.

<sup>3</sup> REV. xxii. 17.

the righteous man forsaken and begging his bread while the wicked are in power and flourish like a green bay-tree; but it is one element in man's probation that his faith and trust should be thus overshadowed; and in view of this he is constantly bidden by the inspired voice to be rich and strong and steadfast in faith, to hold fast the profession of it without wavering, so that nothing may take it away. It was accounted so essential to the saintly character that it was made by the early Church the one test of fitness for admission to paradise.<sup>1</sup>

In the Intermediate State, like the kindred virtue of hope, it becomes more sublimated and pure; the very passage of the soul from the distracting influence and bewilderment of material things to a world of spiritual beings, the purging away of the elements of earthliness, the free and unhindered concentration of the highest faculties, and, above all, the nearer prospect of realisation and fulfilment,—all this will combine to intensify this spiritual power of apprehension, till the expectant saint seems almost to see before him the stable towers and battlements of the city of God; but it will still be faith, for that can only yield to sight when the Vision of God is re-

<sup>1</sup> None but those who died in faith were eligible for the prayers of the Church.

vealed, and man is admitted to see the King in His beauty.

Then next there must be a community of praise and adoration. If death is no breach in the continuity of living, then that which occupies so much of the life of the faithful saint here is carried on hereafter, only purified from earthly alloy and intensified by the associated influence of the angelic host. It is in the conviction of this that in our great hymn of praise we assert that "the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, and the white-robed <sup>1</sup> army of Martyrs" unite in the praises of the Adorable Lord. So too the Church Militant has an instinctive belief that in that service of praise and thanksgiving, wherein we re-present before the Father the Great Sacrifice of Redemption, all are united, the saints on earth and ten thousand times ten thousand saints in Paradise, in one common act of adoring gratitude, as they cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." <sup>2</sup>

If, moreover, the end of all creation is simply the

<sup>1</sup> *Candidatus*, clothed in white, from the custom of candidates for an office wearing the white toga. The Early English Version of the *Te Deum* rendered it "the white oost of martyrism." In Marshall's Primer it was "the fair fellowship of martyrs."

<sup>2</sup> REV. v. 12.

glory of God ;<sup>1</sup> if the praise of Him will be the absorbing occupation of the inhabitants of heaven hereafter, if they are destined to stand, as the rapt Apostle saw them in anticipation, and heard them saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever";<sup>2</sup> if, again, many of the most saintly men testify to having found some of their highest joy on earth in singing the praises of the sanctuary, there can hardly be a question that, through the continuity of life which extends beyond the grave, they will go on to perfect themselves within the veil for their eternal service of praise and adoration. Thus we feel a strong and encouraging conviction that our feeble praises gather strength from association, as they seem to mingle in the one great stream of laud and honour that "the innumerable company of angels" and "the spirits of just men made perfect," are for ever sending up to the throne of God.

Reciprocal  
prayer.

But we believe that there is some closer bond of sympathy and union between the visible and the invisible than can ever be created by a joint participation in hope or faith or acts of praise. It is realised in the thought of reciprocal prayer; for

<sup>1</sup> REV. iv. 11

<sup>2</sup> REV. v. 13.

there is nothing that so completely annihilates distance and bridges over intervening space between divided friends as the habit of interceding for each other. It is but a foretaste of that closer communion which will be perpetuated under the better conditions of a higher spirituality.

We have shown elsewhere<sup>1</sup> how the Church on earth has never failed in her public Service and in the private practice of individual members to pray for the Church in Paradise. We know not, we cannot possibly tell, what the wants of the departed may be at the time that we pray; but there are blessings that can never come amiss to those who are not yet perfected; they are, on the one hand, an ever-increasing peace and light and rest and refreshment: on the other, the effacement of the defiling touch of sin and a constant growth of sanctification, to fit the soul for the consummation of bliss in the Presence of God.

The prayers  
of the  
Church  
Militant.

We prayed for their welfare in life, and our prayers follow them also in death, even in spite of our fears; it matters not that the use and character of the Church's prayers may be misapplied and misunderstood, that they may "have an unfortunate tendency towards dangerous progressions"; that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *After Death*, pt. I., *passim*.

some of the worst abuses of a perverted doctrine of Purgatory may at times have seemed to gather strength from an encouragement of the practice; notwithstanding all this, we are confronted by an overpowering mass of evidence in favour of it; the natural instincts of love and friendship prompt it; reason suggests that what has been the very breath of life to us, it may be for years, cannot possibly be stopped by the mere accident of material separation; Scripture lends a Divine sanction to it, and the whole undivided Church, interpreting Scripture, adopted and cherished the habit, with but a single unworthy objection during its earliest history,<sup>1</sup> as an integral part of its spiritual work.

Prayers of  
the Church  
in Paradise.

But what of the prayers of the faithful dead for those that are militant here on earth? Just as reason pointed out the impossibility of the living ceasing to pray for the dead, so also it satisfies the conscience that they who prayed for us when they were alive in the flesh, encompassed though they were by all the infirmities and weaknesses which drag down the soul, will pray more constantly and effectively, when that which now lets and hinders them is altogether withdrawn.

<sup>1</sup> Acrius of Sebasteia: for the value of his protest cf. *After Death*, pp. 134-5.



Moreover, Scripture indorses what reason suggests. Three times S. John tells us that he saw in vision a presentation of the prayers of the saints at the Altar of God. It was no revelation of the final state, for there will be no room for prayer when the Judgment has been given and our destiny fixed. "The four beasts," he says, "and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."<sup>1</sup> "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."<sup>2</sup>

Yet further, there is a long chain of evidence in the writings of the primitive Fathers and Doctors of the Church which confirms in the fullest manner the principle of the saints' intercessions. But having established a certain assurance that the saints departed do pray for the living, we are met by the hard but intensely interesting question, Upon

<sup>1</sup> REV. v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> REV. viii. 3, 4.

The extent  
of the  
knowledge  
possessed  
by the  
saints.

what knowledge do they base their prayers? Do they share the ignorance, which limits so largely our petitions for them, or are they endowed in the spiritual state with a specific knowledge of what is passing in the world they have left? Have they any means of communication, so that what interests the Church on earth or individual members of it, their wants and struggles, their successes and failures, may find an immediate response and kindle some active sympathy beyond the skies? There is one passage of Scripture which seems to lend a very distinct countenance to the belief. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the writer, after gathering together the many noble deeds of faith which the history of Jewish antiquity furnished in abundance, pictures himself and his fellow-Christians as combatants in the arena, surrounded on all sides by vast crowds of spiritual heroes, rising tier upon tier above their heads, like spectators in the amphitheatre: "seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."<sup>1</sup> The figure suggests that the dead are spectators

<sup>1</sup> τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς τοσούτον ἔχοντες περικειμένον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων, κ.τ.λ. HEB. xii. 1.

watching with eager interest the progress of the contest in which we are engaged. If we only read the English Version there could be no room for doubt that the author intended to signify that the saints, who have entered into rest, are fully conscious of what passes amongst ourselves; but when we turn to the original language we are surprised and disappointed to find that he seems almost of set purpose to have avoided the very word which would have made it absolutely certain, and adopted another which in itself throws no light upon the question. The word which is translated "witnesses" is nowhere used as synonymous with "spectators." There was no dearth of words in the Greek to express the latter had he wished to do so;<sup>1</sup> S. Luke had employed one such in speaking of those who had been the actual companions of our Lord, "which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word."<sup>2</sup>

The early Fathers and interpreters<sup>3</sup> seem to have

<sup>1</sup> *αὐτόπτης, ἐπόπται, ὁραταὶ* and even *αὐτομαρτύρες* were all in familiar use. *μάρτυς* is simply one who gives evidence or testimony.

<sup>2</sup> *οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ Λόγου.* S. LUKE i. 2.

<sup>3</sup> "The Greek expositors generally regard *μαρτύρων* as referring only to their having witnessed for the faith." So CHRYS., *ἐμαρτύρησαν τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ μεγαλειότητι.* THEODORET., *μαρτυρεῖ τῇ δυνάμει τῆς πίστεως.* THEODR. MOPS., *μαρτύρων ἐνταῦθα οὐ*

felt very strongly the significance of the distinction, for we know of no instance where this passage is adduced to support the belief that departed saints possess knowledge of what is passing here upon earth.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless we cannot but feel that the imagery of the amphitheatre does lose much of its force, if we are bound to believe that it was used to the exclusion of the idea it most naturally suggests, viz., that those who throng its benches are eager spectators of those who engage in the contests.

The conclusion then which we are constrained to accept is, that while the figure of the amphitheatre suggests "eye-witnesses," the substitution of another word for one which would have fixed this interpretation leaves the matter in uncertainty. The saints above may be spectators of our earthly trials, we cannot tell; but we have their testimony to the certainty of success, if we follow their example and strive lawfully, as they did, in the same arena.

Although then it would intensify the value of our belief in the Communion of Saints if we were

τῶν πεπονημένων λέγει, ἀλλὰ τῶν μαρτυρούντων πρὸς τὴν πίστιν.  
Cf. ALFORD *in loc.*

<sup>1</sup> I have examined the Patristic evidence as to "the extent of the knowledge possessed by the Saints" at length in *After Death* pt. II. ch. v.

sure that the departed possessed of themselves that knowledge of our trials and wants which would enable them to make these at all times a specific subject of intercession, yet in the absence of such certainty, we have sufficient encouragement in the thought that such knowledge as is needful for them may be conveyed to them in ways that we know not of, by God or by the angels, or by the spirits of those that are perpetually being added to their company.<sup>1</sup>

Here then we have attempted, however inadequately, to set forth some few of the ways in which the idea of communion may be realised. After all our searchings and investigations we are still conscious that clouds and darkness are around and about us, and it must ever be so "until the day break and the shadows flee away."

We have aimed at kindling a keener interest in the condition of the faithful dead, at leading men to regard death not as a violent disruption of occupation and affections, but as the appointed process by which the spirit passes with no real breach of continuity into a higher sphere of activity and love.

The practical value of the doctrine.

<sup>1</sup> S. Augustine especially found comfort in this thought that though the saints are in themselves incapable of knowing all that is going on in this world, yet they received information from different sources. Cf. *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, xv.

In proportion as we are able to grasp this happier conception we shall find strength and encouragement to strive after greater holiness and purity of life, so that when the barriers of time and space which now separate us from those we have loved and lost awhile shall be withdrawn, they may recognise at once the features which will stamp us for their own, and we may enjoy together the fulness of uninterrupted communion.

Till that day arrives let the beautiful prayer which one of the most saintly men of this generation used<sup>1</sup> with far greater comfort, as he said, than he deserved, be often upon our lips: "Remember Thy servants and handmaidens which have departed hence in the Lord: give them eternal rest and peace in Thy heavenly kingdom, and to us such a measure of communion with them as Thou knowest to be best for us. And bring us all to serve Thee in Thine eternal kingdom, when Thou wilt and as Thou wilt, only without shame or sin. Forgive my presumption, and accept my prayers, as Thou didst the prayers of Thine ancient Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

<sup>1</sup> Keble's *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, p. 46.

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